



지갑송 퓨전 판타지 장편소설

레벨업하는 몬스터 1

A Monster Who Levels Up

– 레벨업하는 몬스터 –

- Part 6 -

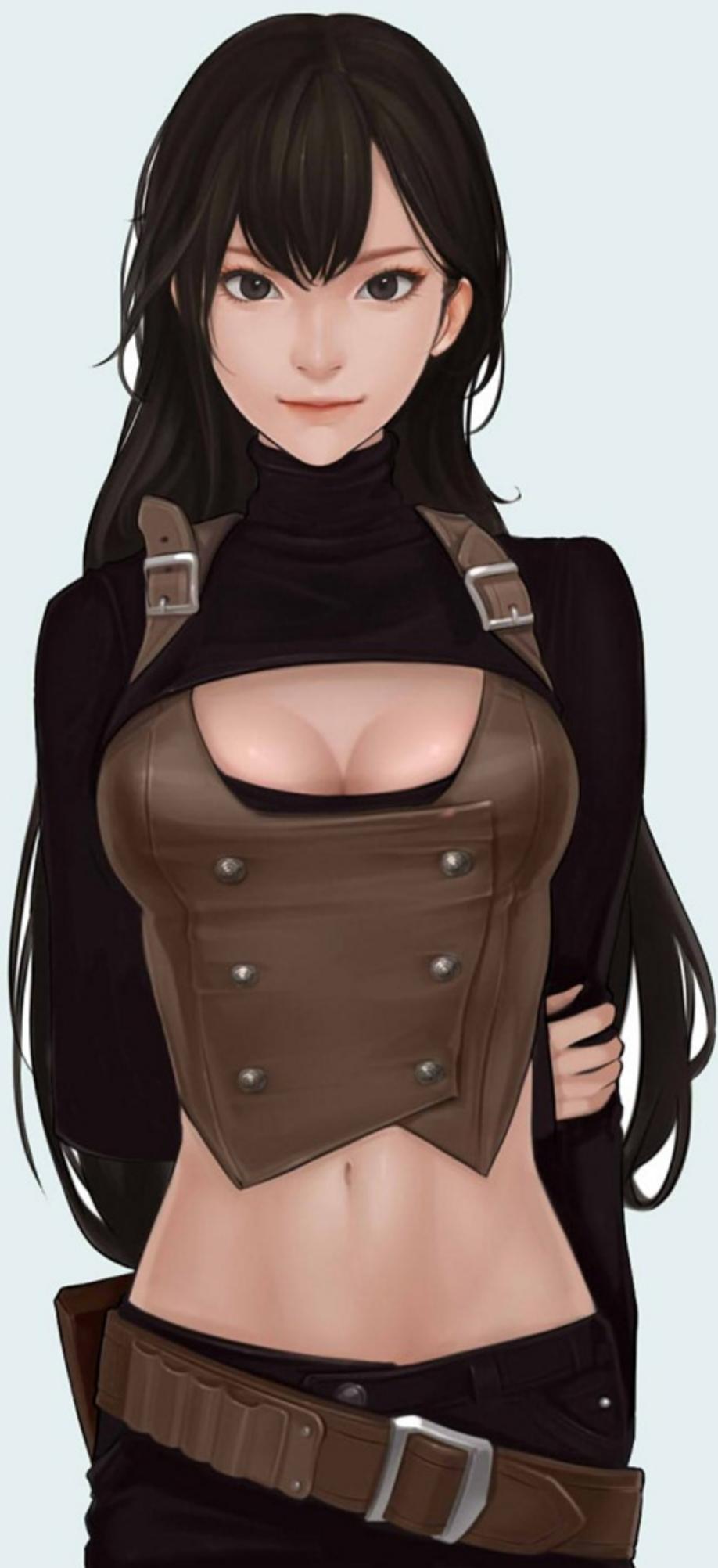
-Author-
Jee Gab Song

[Fantasy-Books]

Hazeline



Kim Yu-Rin





Yu Sae-Jung

Chapter 150

Suspicion and Alliance (1)

“Do you still wish to seduce me?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Sae-Jin needed full five minutes before he finally deciphered that her fleeting words were actually concerning the Guild. And that only came about thanks to the brightly-smiling Kim Yu-Rin clearing up the air after she saw Sae-Jin completely freezing up.

“About the Guild, Mister Sae-Jin. The Guild. Just what were you thinking about?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“.....Aha.”

He cleared his throat with a couple of fake coughs. He got quite embarrassed by the thoughts that were swimming in his mind just now and cold sweat drops trickled down the back of his neck.

“But, why so suddenly? Didn’t you refuse resolutely back then, since you were to become the next Order Master of the Raven?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin asked her, and Kim Yu-Rin replied in a whisper, her expression slightly bitter.

“I’ve received disciplinary action. For disobeying the orders. One can’t become an Order Master for a government-run Knights Order if he or she has a disciplinary record. No, even holding onto the position of the Highest Tier Knight will become uncertain as well.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

That was probably the result of the incident related to the Orc. Although she did successfully defeat the Boss Ogre, that didn’t mean she had the right to disobey the orders from the higher-ups and disregard the rules and regulations of the Knights Order.

He didn’t dig in deeply, choosing to simply smile and nod his head.

“Yes, we’ll be delighted, for sure. And it’s a good timing too, since we’re in the middle

of picking new members as well." (Sae-Jin)

".....Huh? E, excuse me. Wait a minute, are you saying I must participate in that contest, too?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Slightly flustered, Kim Yu-Rin tilted her head while her eyes opened up extra round. He dazedly wondered what this woman was on about, before assuming a relaxed smile.

"But, of course. The thing about the Guild Master personally recommending someone, that has ended a long time ago, so I wonder what Miss Yu-Rin wants from me now? Besides, didn't you say that your rank as the Highest Tier Knight is in a precarious position? If you drop from your Tier, then well, do I even have a reason to accept you in the first place?" (Sae-Jin)

"Eh?! No, wait. What are you even... saying..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

She pouted to show her slight dissatisfaction. However, since it was quite clear who the person handing out the dough was, all she could do at that moment was to complain softly to herself.

"But I even helped you out... And back then, you were the one begging me..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"Well, the circumstances have changed a great deal since then. Our Guild, The Monster, isn't an organisation you can just waltz into, just because you want to... Oh, you heard of the overseas Order called Veritas? Did you know that the Order Master of the Veritas even asked us about joining the Guild recently?" (Sae-Jin)

"....."

Kim Yu-Rin narrowed her eyes as thinly as a flatfish, her cheeks puffing up greatly. Her facial expression seemed to say "I'm really unhappy right now". Although it was very cute and all that...

"So, are you planning to enter the contest? Or are you not going to? Ah, that's right. If I were to explain all the benefits the Guild members receive as an aside... You receive a basket of highest grade potions every month; with the Guild membership card, you can rent out up to three artifacts from TM's Artifact Shop free of charge; and once a year, you're given the first refusal on the Orc Blacksmith's wares..." (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin continued to mutter out a list of benefits that would prove fatally attractive for either a Knight or a Wizard – no, a person living in the troubled current times. Kim Yu-Rin's face started off pouting, but the more she heard, the wider her eyes and mouth became.

Honestly speaking, that was an amazing amount of stuff being offered. Only now had she finally realised why all those Knights kept on singing on and on about The Monster, all the bloody time.

"And finally, if you want one, the Magic Tattoo..." (Sae-Jin)

Even before he could finish his words, Kim Yu-Rin hurriedly grasped both of his hands.

"I'll, I will participate!!" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Her voice was clear, confident, and most importantly, deeply determined.



With many corporations, Knights Orders, and even Wizard Towers participating, the Exhibition held by The Monster was able to draw out an explosive amount of attention from the public, as expected.

And probably because the three Boss Monsters causing chaos in the country had been subjugated right before it started, the whole country talked about nothing else other than the Exhibition. All the internet portal sites, TV networks, newspapers, and even SNS – the categories were only 'Knights' and 'Wizards', but in the country of Korea at the moment, these two were the most important professions there could be.

For now, it was the middle of the public voting cast by the citizens of the entire country. This was the popular vote 'chosen by the public'; after the professional judges narrowed the potential list of candidates down to top 200, 198 candidates agreed to participate in the Exhibition, and from there, a total of 60 people – 30 per category – were chosen as the final candidates.

Sure enough, the fights between several fanbases of popular candidates became truly intense, and most SNS and community chatrooms soon morphed into arenas of fierce verbal warfare by the ardent fans.

However, the clear favourite would always emerge even from under such situations.

- I am... not really good with things like this, but... I ask you for your generous support!! Please, vote for me! (Kim Yu-Rin)

With the support of her pure and beautiful face, it was none other than Kim Yu-Rin, doing her own PR work while looking rather bashful by the occasion.

On the other hand, Sae-Jin ended up getting busier and busier as the interest towards the Exhibition exploded crazily upwards. Well, it was only right that he worked hard and saw the thing to the end, since he did start this whole affair, after all. He performed several interviews, broadcasts, speeches in public stages, etc, etc..... He poured over eight hours everyday on matters related to the contest/exhibition.

"Ah, and this will be the final question! Well, let us take a look at Miss Kim Yu-Rin's promo footage!"

Inside a certain cafe that was completely rented out by a TV station, dozens of cameras were focused on one particular man, and just outside the cafe, a huge crowd of people were looking inside through the thick windows. Of course, this was all because of Kim Sae-Jin, the interviewee.

- I am... not really good with things like this, but... I ask you for your generous support!! Please, vote for me!

"What do you think about Knight Kim Yu-Rin, who is deeply entrenched in the first spot within the 'Knight' category at the moment? Aht, looks like Guild Master has been already won over, after seeing your reactions!"

The reporter asked him while playing the clip of Kim Yu-Rin's promotional video. This was the final question of the final scheduled interview for the day. Feeling like the liberation he craved for was just around the corner, Sae-Jin replied as lightheartedly as possible.

"I haven't focused on the candidate Kim Yu-Rin specifically. In all honesty... Miss Yu-Rin isn't really my type, you see... Hahaha. I'm just kidding. It's a joke. I simply think that all the candidates participating are equally amazing individuals, that's all." (Sae-Jin)

"Oh, oh~. Do you mean, you won't fall for a honey trap, is that it?"

"Well, that is true, but... The truth is, it isn't me who gets to choose the new members of the Guild this time, but it's up to the public to decide, isn't it?" (Sae-Jin)

"As expected of the Guild Master~. Ah, there is also something else. Honestly, I'd like to ask you one last *final* question. By any chance..."

Sae-Jin was about to get up from his seat as soon as the final question was answered, but the darn reporter fired off his next question like a machine gun.

Just where on earth could anyone find the so-called 'last' in the 'final' question..... But he was being surrounded by cameras right now. Sae-Jin did his best to soften the rapidly-hardening face and replied as sincerely as he could.



Sae-Jin *finally* returned home after clearing up his schedules. But unfortunately, what waited for him there was, rather coldly enough, yet more work.

"The Kraken again?" (Sae-Jin)

- "Yes, sir. *This time, it's Japan.*"

The so-called '*it*' item, and going through a huge explosion in popularity currently, was the services of 'Sahrahng', that any nation who cared for its citizens must purchase at least once – landlocked countries excluded, of course.

Sahrahng was the name of Sae-Jin's Kraken; weirdly enough, countless citizens in many countries readily accepted this somewhat *romantic* name. That name ended up having an unexpected PR benefit, somehow.

"Right away?"

- "Yes sir. *They say the situation is quite urgent there. So, they promised to pay twice the regular compensation.*"

"Seriously, do they think this is some sort of nighttime discount or something... Well, it doesn't matter to me either way, but I wonder if Sahrahng can endure any more of this..." (Sae-Jin)

He was speaking nonsense, of course. He could simply summon it and send the darn

Kraken on its way, just like that. But there was a reason why Sae-Jin was deliberately hesitating – the guilty party was a set of very seductive lingerie Yu Sae-Jung was wearing in front of him at that very moment.

If he were to summon Sahrahng, then until the Kraken's job was finished, Sae-Jin had to change and remain in the Leviathan Form. Obviously, he would have to give up on enjoying the pleasures of his human form in the meantime...

"It's alright. Actually, I wanna see the Azure Dragon more than Oppa right now~. It's so cute, you know?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"What?!" (Sae-Jin)

Suddenly, she pushed for the dispatch of the Kraken quite inexplicably.

"Hey, whose side are you on?" (Sae-Jin)

"Hahat, kidding, just kidding. But still, the safety of the Japanese citizens is hanging in the balance, right? It's definitely correct to take care of that first. I mean, when Oppa starts our thing, you last 2 to 3 hours at minimum, after all." (Yu Sae-Jung)

She tightly hugged his back and whispered to his ear. But what made him feel pretty good wasn't that hug, but her words 'lasting 2 to 3 hours at minimum'. Those words easily stroked his pride as a man and of course, the flames of his ego...

"He, heum. Right. Can't be helped. It'll last for over two hours, after all. Right, right."



Within the darkened ruins that once served as Nosferatus' sanctuary, restoration work was being performed under the orders of Bathory. She decided to utilise this place as her new headquarters.

And so, Vampires were busy using magic to restore the fallen buildings, build brand new residential structures, and other construction work at the moment.

"You're saying that squid also belongs to Kim Sae-Jin?" (Bathory)

Of course, the person responsible for ordering the massive construction project was comfortably lying on a couch while watching the TV. She was watching the news

broadcast concerning the activities of a Kraken with a somewhat embarrassing name called 'Sahrahng'.

"Yes, that is correct, my Lady."

"...It's like he has everything I want to own, you know? Maybe his hobby is similar to mine or something. Heck, I also wanted to possess that white tiger he was with, too..."
(Bathory)

The news regarding the Kraken ended fairly quickly. And it was so adorable, too... Bathory licked her lips and expressed emotions of wanting to see more, but was unable to. However, the next piece of footage then showed off a news that inflamed her interest far more greatly than the previous article could ever do.

- Currently, the total number of votes cast by the public in The Monster's Exhibition now exceeds ten million. This is...

The Monster – the world-renowned Guild that even the word 'Guild' wasn't a good enough fit to describe it. And the head of that Guild was Kim Sae-Jin.

Bathory recalled the acute recollection of the fine past (?) quite unexpectedly, back when she tore into him and he tore into her. Those days when they were vicious and so beast-like.

"...Hey, wait a sec. Didn't you say something about one of my Wizards being *undercover* there as a candidate? Isn't she a bit famous or something?" (Bathory)

"Ma'am? Ah, oh, yes, that is correct. She's called 'Emil Rerheu of the Great Wisdom' and it's the cover identity of the Apostle Reuhemile, my Lady. According to human's grading system, she's A-class, in other words, a high tier Wizard."

"She disguised herself as an Elf?" (Bathory)

"Yes, my Lady."

"Hmm....."

Bathory rubbed her chin and fell into a deep chain of thought.

Nowadays, something was weird about the way the Vampire Lord moved around. No,

instead of calling it weird... well, he hadn't shown up at all lately. Bathory trusted her instincts greatly, and right now, she could smell something very rotten coming from the Lord's camp. It was even more smellier than a clogged up sewer.

And more importantly, Kim Sae-Jin's eyes that were filled with unshakeable confidence when he said, "The Lord will betray you."

That weighed on her mind the most.

"Okay, let's do this. I'll enter the exhibition disguised as her. It's easier than drinking cold soup for me to change my face with magic, see." (Bathory)

"Yes..... yes?! Wha, what do you mean by that, my Lady?"

The Apostle couldn't even speak properly after he got stunned from her sudden declaration. In this critical time, as the Fissure was nearing the complete unsealing, just how many times did she have to act out of control?

"I've got things to talk about with that conceited bastard, Kim Sae-Jin, you see? And besides... if all goes well, we can even cooperate together, too." (Bathory)

The 'Fissure' opening in full and becoming the 'gate' was already an unavoidable fact. There was not one existence alive in this world that could close the Fissure that was about to open up, after all.

However, if the Vampire Lord did indeed plan to betray her, then she needed to hit him first before that happened. Just from this point alone, the possibility of cooperating together with that stinking human rose up. She was thinking of outwardly allying herself with that bastard and getting rid of the Lord, then kill Kim Sae-Jin at a later date, and finally possess the rich orchard called the Fissure all for herself.

"Co, cooperation, with measly humans?! But how...?"

"You chose to serve me, not the Lord, no? That's why you built your little nest in here, too. If the Lord is really thinking of funny things right now, shouldn't we get him first and set the plan on the correct path?"

The Apostle questioned, but the smile on Bathory's lips grew thicker the more he asked. And confronted by that beautiful yet lethal smile, the only thing this Apostle could do was to nod his head quietly.

Chapter 151

Suspicion and Alliance (2)

Exactly two weeks had passed by since the Exhibition got under way.

And, as if to completely mock Sae-Jin's initial worries of "Will the public shake off their fear and unite for something as unimportant as picking new members for his Guild?", the whole thing continued on, while proving to be a roaring success in the process.

Now, the new worries were of people shaking off too much fear, and the excessively united solidarity of the citizens was rapidly changing into a problem instead.

Why didn't the fans stop at praising the candidates they liked, and found a need to irritate and attack others, too? Sae-Jin just couldn't understand it. But whatever the case may have been, 15 Knights and 15 Wizards, for a total of 30 participants were finalised.

And here on out, these people were to engage in things like physical battles between Knights, and magic competition between Wizards, and steal "points" from other contestants.

"This is beyond the level of simple chaos, you know? Even in the Dawn, everyone is talking about this only." (Yu Sae-Jung)

While a refreshing smile was pasted on her face, Yu Sae-Jung's eyes were watching the TV, her right hand moved the mouse connected to the notebook PC, and finally, with her left hand, she was busy sending text messages via her smartphone.

It was a near-miraculous multi-tasking.

"By the way, Sae-Jung... Why are you so busy?" (Sae-Jin)

"Uh? Ah, well, I'm quite busy lately just as much as you, Oppa. See, since Oppa doesn't wanna hang out with me no~ more, I was forced into discovering the importance as well as the joy of socialising. So, I went to lots of gatherings and stuff, and well, it's like, people are really curious right now – just what will be the next test, internally whom

we are rooting for, that sort of stuff." (Yu Sae-Jung)

".....Oh, really?"

Sae-Jin sneakily shifted his eyes and looked at her phone's display. Really, endless stream of messages were popping up on a group chat room she was participating in. However, the name of the chat room was... 'The Dawn Knights Order 1st Team Super Elites Meet'. Although it was a rather childish title, '1st Team' was usually made up of the core fighting force of the Knights Order, so it wasn't a baseless boasting at all.

"...!"

It was then, the eyes of the 'Wolf' sharply gleamed. It was not because of the group chat, though – no, it was because of a private messaging box floating on the middle of the phone's display that popped up just as he sneaked a glance while Yu Sae-Jung's attention was turned towards him.

[Kim Jung-Ho: Miss Sae-Jung, whatcha doing?]

Even with a quick glance, that was a guy's name; on the profile pic, even an image of a guy prominently on display, and to cap it off, those words that would be interpreted as that guy having *interest* in her, regardless of who read it...

"That's a man." (Sae-Jin)

A cold voice leaked out of Sae-Jin before he noticed it. Yu Sae-Jung tilted her head in a slight bafflement.

".....Eh?"

"That. That guy, on the phone. That's a man, isn't it?" (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin pointed at the phone. But, by then, the alert for receiving a PM had come and gone.

Her eyes followed his pointing finger, then her brows narrowed slightly.

"What the. You were sneaking a look at my phone?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"What do you mean, sneaking? I can see it plainly in the open." (Sae-Jin)

"Oh, man. You don't let me see your phone no matter what, yet you look at mine without permission?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

She puffed her cheeks in a show of annoyance. However, he didn't have the leeway to mind that right now. Still, she did look quite adorable while doing that, so he patted her head anyways.

"No, wait. You just received a text from a guy, see. And he was definitely flirting with you." (Sae-Jin)

"This is a group chat, so no idea what you are talking about... Wait, Oppa doesn't know what a group chat is? You know, group chat rooms. That's where a group of people converse by sending text messages..."

Kim Sae-Jin's forehead creased up deeply. Was she treating him like an 80-year old or something...?

"I know what a group chat is, okay? But that message wasn't part of the group chat, but a private message. I saw it." (Sae-Jin)

".....Mm?"

Her face wavered in dazement. Sae-Jin didn't miss this chance and extended his hand out quickly.

His purpose was to forcibly kidnap, the aim being her phone.

However, she swiftly hid the phone behind her back.

Her reaction speed was really fast. But that only fanned the flames of suspicion, instead.

Sae-Jin's brows quivered in dissatisfaction.

"Give me that. Why aren't you giving it to me?" (Sae-Jin)

"Wait, just wait for a second, okay? This, this isn't what Oppa thinks..." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"That is why I'm telling you to hand it over. Hey, why did that guy call you Miss Sae-Jung?" (Sae-Jin)

"He's... the son of Jaesung Group's VP. Because he's the last born, he can't inherit the family business. So he focused on being a Knight, and now, he's a High Tier with the Raven Order, and his future prospects are really promising..." (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung began spouting gibberish with a reddened face.

"No, you don't have to read out his resume. Just give me the phone." (Sae-Jin)

"R, really, it's nothing important, really. Oppa also sometimes message Hazeline Unni, right? It's like that." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"What?"

Suddenly, he got really furious. The messages he sent to Hazeline now and then were...

Damn it, this is what they call 'double standard', isn't it?

Sae-Jin held his breath back and calmed himself down, before slowly continuing on with his words.

"...You're right. It could also be like that. However, here's the thing. Does that guy know you and I are in a relationship?" (Sae-Jin)

Hazeline was acting in that way even though she knew this fact. However, she had the sort-of suitable excuse of Elves being hopeless in love, so what did this guy, Kim Jung-Ho, has for one?

Hearing his question, Yu Sae-Jung rolled her eyes over and over as if she was trying to think of something, but eventually, spat out a lengthy sigh and murmured her reply.

"No. He doesn't know." (Yu Sae-Jung)

She utilised the moment of Sae-Jin freezing up in shock and poured out the rest of the story.

"Well, within our Knights Order, not many people know of us living together." (Yu Sae-Jung)

".....But, how come?"

"That's because we haven't officially announced it." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"But, anyone with even half a brain should know by now. We've been living together for so long now. No, wait. Fine, some people might not know, that's true, but didn't you say he's the last born from a big Chaebol family? So how can he not know?" (Sae-Jin)

Yu Sae-Jung smirked slightly. Of course, within certain circles of reporters, her living together with Sae-Jin was already an open secret. But since almost all of them kept their mouths shut real tight, not even those commonly-seen office memos circulated. After all, being frowned upon by The Monster and the Dawn was buying a one-way ticket straight to career suicide.

"Ng. He doesn't know. It's like he's been abandoned by his family, you know. He's a really pitiable guy in that regard. People within the Knights Order think the same, too – it's like, we're close siblings, an older brother and a younger sister. Except for Mister Joo Ji-Hyuk, though." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Really? No, there is no way that's the case. That guy most likely knows of our relationship already. No matter how *abandoned* he is by his family, the big corporation..." (Sae-Jin)

"Here. Here, why don't you take a look? Look first before you judge." (Yu Sae-Jung)

As if she thought Sae-Jin had softened enough now, Yu Sae-Jung handed over her phone quite easily.

"Look, look. It's really nothing like I told you." (Yu Sae-Jung)

If Sae-Jin was a man possessing generosity that was as wide as open seas and endless rivers, then he might have returned the phone back to her while saying, "No, I believe in you," with a firm, dignified, yet considerate voice.

"But, well, open seas and rivers are just too small to contain a Leviathan, though." (Sae-Jin)

".....What are you even talking about?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

He muttered some incomprehensible excuse and checked the contents on the smartphone.

[Miss Sae-Jung, you coming to today's business conference?] (13th February, 10:03 AM)

[Nope. Why should I go there?] (13th February, 09:43 PM)

[Haha, is that so? I can't go there, even though I want to...] (13th February, 09:45 PM)

== (Similar types of messages continue. Omitted by the author. No, really.)

[Kim Jung-Ho: Miss Sae-Jung, whatcha doing?] (4th March, 06:33 PM)

Sae-Jin found Yu Sae-Jung's defenses quite satisfactory. However, why on earth was this fool, Kim Jung-Ho, being so persistent...? While he was concentrating on the phone, Yu Sae-Jung moved her agile, cat-like hands swiftly and snatched away his phone instead.

"I'm gonna look at Oppa's phone, too." (Yu Sae-Jung)

In that moment, Sae-Jin froze up like a statue. Thankfully, though, he hadn't had much contact with women of late.

Even Hazeline stayed away, too. As if she became conscious of her actions, other than leaving comments such as "Photo came out nicely" on images he uploaded on his Insta*ram account every now and then, she did not make one single attempt to call him up for personal matters.

"Hmm, hmm. Yep. Good." (Yu Sae-Jung)

Finishing her inspection in less than three minutes, Yu Sae-Jung put his phone down, quite pleased by the result. Then, she slid into Sae-Jin's embrace quite comfortably.

"Ah, that's right. Oppa, why didn't that Wizard from Bangbae-Dong become a candidate?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Mm?"

"No, I mean, doesn't he have a good relationship with us? He did give us all of his grimoires and stuff, too. I hear that the reason for the participating Wizards being so hands-on during the contest is because they wanna enter The Monster's members-only library, the only one in the world where the full set of his grimoires are being kept in one place. Also, didn't he release the grimoire number 25 not too long ago?"

Two days ago, the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong published the grimoire number 25. It did incite the predictably-explosive reaction, but unfortunately for everyone, the only place this book was displayed, was The Monster's members-only library.

The reason why it hadn't found a home in other Wizard Towers yet, was... because of the truly intense behind-the-scenes battle going on at the moment. Besides the excessive attempts at suppression, simple threats of exposing one's corrupt dealings if one did not give up trying to purchase the grimoire were thrown around, and even some local Wizard Towers lobbied the government to expel the members of overseas Wizard Tower representatives from the country...

And Sae-Jin wasn't aware of such vulgar, disgusting, and desperate warfare happening beneath the surface.

"Ah, the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong?" (Sae-Jin)

"Ng. I'd like to meet him at least once." (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung spoke to him with a bright smile on her face.

Seeing her totally oblivious and quite adorable smile, Sae-Jin made up his mind, his lips quivering a little. It seemed that, the time to tell her the truth about this Wizard persona had arrived. She knew that his Trait was him transforming into the Leviathan. She also knew that he could borrow the Leviathan's powers while he was "human", as well.

"The Wizard of Bangbae-Dong, is me." (Sae-Jin)

"..... Ng?"

After a lengthy silence, Yu Sae-Jung asked back with a dazed face.

"What? What do you mean by that? The name of the Bangbae-Dong Wizard is 'Meh'?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

He thought she was joking, but her expression and the tone of voice were serious. Sae-Jin broke out in a hearty laughter and shook his head.

“Hahaha. No, I am the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong. You haven’t noticed at all?” (Sae-Jin)

“Uh, uh... What did you say?! But, but how!! You’re lying!!” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Utterly shocked out of her mind, Yu Sae-Jung jumped around wildly, then she grabbed his shoulders and shook him hard.

“Think about it carefully, now. The Leviathan is a creature of magic. And why would the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong, who had no contact with us, give us the grimoires?” (Sae-Jin)

“.....OMG.” (*TL: LOL, the raw doesn’t say that, but I inserted that in. The raw is literally one word: “Hul”. It has no meaning other than to express one’s shock.*)

Within Yu Sae-Jung’s eyes and mouth that couldn’t get any wider, astonishment filled up. Although this was quite similar to when he confessed to being the Orc Blacksmith, the shock she received seemed to be far greater this time around.

However, she recovered not too long after, and then began calculating potential profit and losses.

“O, Oppa, in that case, can you let the Dawn keep the grimoires of Bangbae-Dong Wizard? You know, right? That we’ve been working hard to establish a Wizard Tower for a while now.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“.....What the heck, that’s all? You aren’t gonna be shocked anymore?” (Sae-Jin)

“Huh? Ah! No, I’m really, stupefyingly stunned right now! Woo-wah!! Woooooowsers!!! Oppa, you’re so amaaaazing!! Really!” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Seeing her like this, using hands and feet to express how ‘stunned’ she was, she seemed definitely a lot more vibrant and cheerful than in the past. Comparing the first time he met her to her of now, it was to the point of him feeling a huge sense of change from her.

“Oppa is so handsome, and his body is so buff, and he can make such nice weapons, and now, he can even use magic so nicely, too.....” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung dug deeper into his arms while whispering in a ‘pity me, please’ type of voice. Sae-Jin stared at her dumbfoundedly, before a slight smirk crept up on his lips.

“Let’s do it this way. Divide the shares of the Wizard Tower between the Dawn and The Monster. With that, not only the grimoires will be furnished in their entirety, but even the Wizard’s name will be associated with the Tower.” (Sae-Jin)

The negotiation began in earnest.

Yu Sae-Jung’s eyes shook imperceptibly.

“.....Huh? But, but why? Why? That doesn’t make sense at all... The Monster didn’t even help out when the Dawn’s been trying to set up a Wizard Tower until now.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“But I’ll be helping out with this, right? And it’ll also be a huge help, too. The grimoires of the famed Wizard, plus his name on top. With that, as soon as the Tower gets off the ground, I’m pretty sure it’ll become a *recognised* Tower right away.” (Sae-Jin)

“.....”

Around three seconds of silence later, she sneakily slipped out from his embrace, took her phone, and made a call to someone.

Sae-Jin leisurely waited for the ‘other’ side’s opinion.



The middle of March. The martial contest between Knights and the magic competition between Wizards, that drew in over 40,000 live audience per match, finally came to a conclusion.

Kim Yu-Rin recorded an overwhelming 14 victories and zero defeats within the Knight category, while on the magic category, an unknown Elf Wizard named Emil Rerheu recorded the same overwhelming record as well.

Through various other tests such as defeating Monsters, contribution to the good of public interest, game show-like battle of common knowledge, etc, etc, twenty candidates out of remaining thirty got disqualified. And those who got disqualified, while leaving behind ‘GIFs’ of themselves looking remorseful, discontent or furious –

one Wizard even broke down and cried his eyes out – disappeared to where they came from.

Kim Sae-Jin then decided to have an one-on-one interview with the ten remaining candidates. He wanted to weed out bad characters, of course, and the broadcaster also wished to capture the process as well.

“Pleasure to meet you, Wizard Emil Rerheu.” (Sae-Jin)

“Me too, it’s a nice pleasure~.”

The first interviewee happened to be the Wizard, Emil Rerheu. He sensed a somewhat dangerous and insidious aura coming from her, but Sae-Jin decided not to judge too prematurely.

“The scores for common knowledge is... zero?! Reading up on the follow-up words of the judges, this is on the level of a primate or a reptile... It seems that, you haven’t studied a lot until now?” (Sae-Jin)

He deliberately threw out the sensitive topic first while activating the Eyes of the Wolf. He was trying to see into this Wizard’s heart and her personality.

“.....And what crappy thing are you trying to pull here?”

She smirked refreshingly, before emitting a bit of Mana all around her, destroying every single camera installed in the interview room.

“What the...!!” (Sae-Jin)

“I’d prefer you stop looking at me with those disgusting eyes. I mean, I came all the way here just to negotiate, yet you’re making me want to kill you right now, you know.”

Along with thick killing intent, the outer skin of the Elf Emil Rerheu melted down like a dough.

And the person revealed was Prillani Bathory.

Sae-Jin couldn’t help but admire her perfect disguising technique. Really, did this mean that the ‘queen’ in the state of perfection could even fool the senses of the Wolf?

"Hello, kid. Been a while." (Bathory)

Bathory lightly tapped on his neck as she spoke. Right away, the interior of the room darkened and got separated from the rest of the world.

".....Uh-whew. Yeah, it has been a while. Another isolation barrier?" (Sae-Jin)

Unlike his relaxed exclamation, his heart was beating like crazy in his chest.

"Yo. You don't have to tense up so much. I came here to cooperate with you, after all." (Bathory)

"Cooperate?" (Sae-Jin)

"That's right." (Bathory)

At Kim Sae-Jin's still confused face, Bathory showed a cheeky smile.

"You see, I'll help you kill the Vampire Lord. How about it?" (Bathory)

"What.....?!" (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin's consciousness shook for a moment after seeing her smile. But that was all. Several alert windows indicating that Skills had been activated popped into his view one after the other, instead.

[The unique Skill, 'The Most Pure Divine Body' has activated.] [Bathory's ultra-high grade Seduction magic has been resisted!] [A part of the Seduction magic has been reflected back to the original caster!]

Immediately, her brows quivered ever so slightly. The alert windows informed him of the reason. However, Sae-Jin maintained his poker face and tilted his head.

'Whew-woo... '

So, this new Skill helped him out in this manner. Sae-Jin let out a silent sigh of relief

while checking out the information window for ‘The Most Pure Divine Body’.

[The Most Pure Divine Body]

- The host’s body will be purified of all impurities.
- Depending on the will of the host, the physical strength of the body can be raised up to a maximum of 1000%. However, the higher the percentage, the shorter the duration.
- The Proficiency Level of the Skill, ‘Resistance’, will be increased. And as a part of the defense mechanism, certain amount of the resisted magic or physical attack will be reflected back.
- Will be applied to all Forms.

Chapter 152

Suspicion and Alliance (3)

“...You sure know some weird tricks, don’t you?” (Bathory)

Bathory glared at Sae-Jin as she spoke. It was just her looking at him, yet the pressure emanating from her eyes felt like a noose was tightening around his neck. If a normal person faced such a cold pair of eyes, then that person would’ve kicked the bucket in that instant.

“What are you on about?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin replied with the most deadpan expression he could muster. Bathory hadn’t sensed that he consciously invoked magic, so she did not say anything else.

“Fine, whatever.” (Bathory)

The weighty Mana pressing down on his entire body was withdrawn. Sae-Jin felt a slight sense of enervation.

“Woo-uh.” (Sae-Jin)

“So, you gonna cooperate with me or what?” (Bathory)

Bathory crossed her arms while displaying the unsatisfactory mood. But right now, Sae-Jin could not understand this new attitude of hers. Seriously, back then, she wanted to rip his limbs apart just for questioning the Vampire Lord, yet, here she was...

Bathory didn’t wait for his answer and continued with what she wanted to say. This one, though, was as far removed from the main topic as humanly possible.

“Oh, by the way, kid – just what is this ‘The Monster’ and why is it causing such a chaos? Seriously, ‘it’ does something, then fools rush in like a mad mob, and that inconveniences me greatly. Did you know that I so wanted to kill a few b*stards on my way here but had to endure it so much?” (Bathory)

The Elf Wizard Emil Rerheu enjoyed huge fame. Of course, odds were, that was due to the aura of seduction inherent within Bathory's Mana, but still, the size of her fanbase was second only to Kim Yu-Rin's.

And to be brutally honest, it was understandable why Emil/Bathory's appearance on TV screens garnered so much popularity. She wielded refreshingly awesome destruction magic to blow everything away and acted like the queen that she was – exuding an aura of a tyrant, to boot.

"Watch the TV, you'll know. It's the world's greatest Guild. Offering the best advantages in the world, and the world's best welfare benefits, too. The top Guild in the world that every Knight and Wizard wish to join." (Sae-Jin)

His voice overflowed with pride.

"Hmm... But, don't you think it's funny to talk about the world when you're from this tiny-as-a-rat's-a*s land?" (Bathory)

"Then, just what are you idiots trying to do in that tiny-as-a-rat's-a*s land in the first place?" (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin looked straight into Bathory's eyes and retorted. Her expression was rather unreadable, hard to tell whether she was peeved off or happy. But, she hardened her face soon enough and asked him once more.

"...The cooperation. You in, or not?" (Bathory)

"You should tell me the contents first." (Sae-Jin)

"I told you already. I'll help you to kill the Lord." (Bathory)

It was such a different attitude compared to the past, when she was still worshipping the Lord. It was questionable how could a person change so quickly, but still, it would be great if one more thorn in his side was removed permanently.

But the problem was after Bathory had become the new Lord.

"And after that?" (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin sharply opened his eyes.

"After that, you people should do whatever accordingly." (Bathory)

Bathory sneered as she continued.

"Hey, you. I think you're mistaken about something here. The portal opening up, that's like, set in stone, you know? No matter how much you struggle, that'll never change. You should be preparing for the 'aftermath', instead of thinking about blocking the portal or something~." (Bathory)

"In that case, killing the Lord is one of the things to prepare for the 'aftermath', is that it?" (Sae-Jin)

"That's right. According to your guess, the Lord wants to return to the Earth's past, no?" (Bathory)

"....."

Sae-Jin shut his mouth.

Initially, he did think that the Lord wanted to return to this planet's past. But after giving it more thought, he became aware that this was not the correct guess as well. The odds of the Lord's plan being not about going to the past, but maintaining the same timeline as the stage called the Earth and moving to another dimension, were very high.

So, Sae-Jin explained this to Bathory.

"...That's complicated. Make it easier to understand." (Bathory)

"Okay, so... If the Lord succeeded in going back in time, then the 'present' should have been affected, right? Like, because of the Lord going back in time, the world should have become the paradise for Vampires or some such. But that didn't happen. So, I'm saying, my initial guess is not correct. That b*stard is trying to jump dimensions only." (Sae-Jin)

"...And when you say dimensions, you saying there can be many of those existing in the same space?" (Bathory)

"Correct. One of the definitions applied to the Fissure is that it's a gap between different dimensions and different worlds, so you can get to other dimensions through

it." (Sae-Jin)

The reason why Sae-Jin said all of this, was to tell her that killing the Vampire Lord had nothing to do with the preparations for the 'aftermath'. Technically speaking, the Earth of another dimension had no relation with the matters of this world, after all.

As if Bathory somehow understood the meaning behind his explanations, her face crumpled to resemble a rakshasi. (*TL: A rakshasi is a female version of rakshasa. Google one to get the feel for how 'ugly' it looks. Beware of the Bollywood film popping up instead, though.*)

"So, you don't wanna cooperate?" (Bathory)

"....."

Sae-Jin didn't reply immediately. And within this silence, Bathory forced out a smile and began emitting Mana from her body.

"You're not gonna answer?" (Bathory)

There was no need for an answer, though. For better or worse, her helping out in killing the Vampire Lord would be a good thing, after all.

However, he simply maintained his silence while transforming into the Lycanthrope.

Since she came to seek cooperation, that meant, at minimum, she wasn't thinking of killing him here. In that case, he wouldn't miss this chance to drink some more of her blood.

"You really ain't gonna answer?" (Bathory)

Bathory's face became dumbfounded. But Sae-Jin simply pounced on her without a single shred of hesitation, pressed her down with his arms and his jaw descended down on her pale smooth neck.

[The blood of Bathory has been ingested...]

Accompanying that feel-good alert window, a huge impact shook his brain. Bathory simply punched the side of his head. However, her strength in 100% condition was truly terrifying...

“Kkyaaachk!!”

One saving grace was that she'd suffer the same amount of damage as Sae-Jin received. While borrowing the strength of the potions, he pounced on Bathory once more.



After getting beat up by Bathory till he was on the cusp of dying, Sae-Jin acted as if he had no choice while accepting her offer. Right next day, he organised a meeting.

The participants were Kim Yu-Rin, Yi Hye-Rin, Hazeline, Yu Baek-Song, Joo Ji-Hyuk, Lillia, Kim Sun-Ho, and even Rhosrahdel. All eight of them gathered in the secret underground conference room.

Kim Sae-Jin unpacked the rather horrifying prospect of cooperating with Bathory to the gathered members first, and then explained what they had to do next.

“For now, Rhosrahdel will continue to stay beside Bathory.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Huh?!”

At Sae-Jin's orders, Rhosrahdel's expression collapsed like that of a person who just lost his country or something.

“Obviously, we will need someone to spy on her movements. And as for actual gathering of information as well as searching for locations, Miss Yu Baek-Song and Mister Kim Sun-Ho, please handle them along with the available intelligence operatives.” (Sae-Jin)

“Got it.”

“Yes, boss. Understood.”

Yu Baek-Song and Kim Sun-Ho nodded their heads. However, their sights were locked onto Kaiser the 2nd acting coquettishly on Sae-Jin's thighs.

“As for the Knights, please concentrate on getting stronger. Also, Miss Kim Yu-Rin should be unfamiliar with handling a Griffin, so please head over to the Nesting area and get to grips on how to control a Griffin perfectly. Ah, after the Exhibition ends, of course.” (Sae-Jin)

"Yes, I understand!"

Kim Yu-Rin replied back energetically. And so, Sae-Jin was able to end the meeting quite quickly.

Next up, was Yi Hye-Rin's mischievous expressions of her admiration.

"Ohhhh~~. Our Guild Master looks so cool today~." (Yi Hye-Rin)

"...Please stop joking around." (Sae-Jin)

"Ehehehe. Ah, right – will it be fine with a non-Guild member taking part here?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

With a guilty face, Kim Yu-Rin's shoulders trembled.

"It'll be fine, since her admission is almost a sure thing anyway. So, everyone, disperse! We don't have much time!" (Sae-Jin)

Bathory said the Fissure/portal should fully open up between October and December, so they indeed didn't have a lot of time left. No, it was more correct to say it was imminent.

At Sae-Jin's words, the members all replied with lots of spirit and hurriedly went on their own ways.



10 days later, 2nd of April.

The Exhibition that garnered so much of the public's passionate support finally ended.

The successful candidates in the Knight category were Kim Yu-Rin and Joo Oh-Hyung, both of them Highest Tier Knights. A pretty interesting spectacle of sorts unfolded on the presentation stage during the final broadcast where the successful candidates were announced – Kim Yu-Rin's serene speech on her thoughts on entering the Guild contrasted rather sharply with the heartfelt dedication read out by the tearful Joo Oh-Hyung.

On the other side, the two Wizard candidates who made it were a male Elf named

'Bretin' as well as Emil Rerheu, as promised to Bathory previously.

However, Bathory wanted to look stylish in an old fashioned kind of way, and quoted a four-word idiom during her acceptance speech. Unfortunately, she used it in such a wrong context, it wasn't even funny anymore. Kim Sae-Jin just couldn't understand why she ended up saying the four-word idiom "Eup-Cham-Ma-Sok" during such a happy occasion. (*TL: This idiom actually comes from the Romance of the Three Kingdoms. This author must have a thing for RoTK or something. Basically, it means foregoing personal feelings and upholding the military command structure, or something similar to that effect. Not sure how you can Google this one if you're interested in finding out what's what. Oh well.*)

But he heard on the following day, that it was Rhosrahdel who deliberately fed Bathory nonsense in order to publicly embarrass her.

And predictably on the day after that, Bathory found the truth out via the Internet and invaded the Guild HQ in unbridled rage while shouting out that she was going to kill Rhosrahdel.

Fortunately, though, the temporary cooperation pact between her and Sae-Jin remained intact.

- The completion ceremony for the Dawn Corporation's and TM's Wizard Tower, the collaboration of the Dawn and The Monster.
- The unrivalled financial muscle and The Monster, combined.
- According to the Dawn, the time to invest more capital and to diversify its portfolio is when the state of current affairs are at most unstable.

And then.

Another nuclear bombshell dropped. A Wizard Tower that the Dawn Corporation and The Monster each held 5.5:4.5 of shares was officially launched.

Obviously, that alone lacked the necessary oomph to cause a commotion in the

country.

Even if it was the Dawn, the number 1 in the business sector, a modern day Wizard Tower was a cradle of *wisdom* built from dozens upon dozens of years of accumulated experience and knowledge. The consensus of industry experts from other Wizard Towers were that, even if it was the Dawn, one should be ready to endure decades of losses and ridicule.

However, a news with an ‘exclusive report’ tagged on got published soon after, and the whole situation got turned around 180 degrees.

A Wizard that didn’t put down his roots in any Wizard Towers until now.

Not only referred to with the worldwide recognition as the greatest talent in magic, but also being seen as a true iconic genius – the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong.

He had proudly aligned his name with the Dawn’s new Wizard Tower.

As if that wasn’t enough, not only he offered up his grimoires number 1 to 25, he also announced on his blog that, all subsequent published grimoires would be donated to the Tower, as well.

It was, without a doubt, a scoop on the level of nuclear explosion, and many Wizard Towers felt like they had dropped a newborn baby in a mud pit, and realised they had no choice but to give in.

And now...

The protagonist that had pushed other Wizards into a state of confusion and terror was actually enjoying a holiday of sorts, that was a world far removed from the whirlwinds of the Wizarding community.

“So, how is it? How’s the media reacting to the news?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin tightly hugged Yu Sae-Jung, who seemed to be stuck like a glue to her notebook PC, and asked.

“It’s seriously great. The number one liked comment is [the Dawn and The Monster and Bangbae-Dong Wizard come together, and the nature’s balance is upset.] Heeheehee.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Is that so? Hey, you seemed to be really interested in this Wizard Tower business, though." (Sae-Jin)

"Ng, of course. I pushed for this business venture, after all." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Really?"

"Yep. That is why, the Tower's Operational Director is me~." (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung pecked a little kiss on Sae-Jin's cheek and smiled happily.

As an aside, a Tower Director and a Tower Lord was not the same. If one thought of Tower Director as a chairman of the board, then the Tower Lord was like the dean of a school. And sure enough, a Tower Director's powers were greater than that of a Tower Lord's.

"What the. Why didn't you say anything? I'd have negotiated with a bit more leisure, then." (Sae-Jin)

The guy in charge of making this deal work, Jo Hahn-Sung, negotiated so tenaciously that even left the representatives of the Dawn utterly blown away. According to him, a former superior officer who bullied him in the distant past just so happened to be one of the Dawn's negotiators, so that was why...

"It's alright. After all, my share is fixed at 35% anyways. The rest belongs to my grandpa and my dad. It'll be better if Oppa has the rest, instead." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"....."

Should he feel proud of her or be sorry for her? Sae-Jin formed a slightly apologetic smile, leaned his head on her shoulder, and they looked at the notebook PC together.

"Oh. Hey, isn't this guy the Vice Lord of the Seoul Wizard Tower? And this person over here, that's the Tower Lord of Busan Tower, right?" (Sae-Jin)

"Ng. I thought they would be people that lacked nothing, but the amount of requests for open position coming through is just so much. Someone's PR/resume data was as big as 1GB, you know?... Ah, that's right. Even foreigners sent in some. Look, look. Here's the Tower Lord for the Velli Wizard Tower, ranked fifth in the world."

Yu Sae-Jung pulled up a photo. And the Tower Lord shown was a female Elf with a slick figure that sure fitted the name of the Tower. She must be really good at *belly* dancing...

"Hah, how ridiculous! Hey *Ahjussi*, where do you think you're looking at?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

".....Ah, it's nothing. *Cough*. Well, it's all good news. Our Wizard Tower should grow fast at this rate." (Sae-Jin)

"...Ng. The influence of the Bangbae-Dong Wizard was really huge. We only have around 100 grimoires stored in the Tower, but over a thousand Wizards are applying to enter, you know?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

A single grimoire was really expensive. And it was also difficult to procure one, too. Most regular mid grade grimoires fetched upwards of several million dollars. But more importantly, even with enough money, the products themselves were not available to begin with, so it was virtually impossible to buy one.

Well, even the Dawn couldn't purchase more than 75 grimoires (25 grimoires of the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong not counted), so there...

Many of the grimoires stored in a Wizard Tower were actually developed and invented through hard work and as well as the investment of a great amount of time by the Wizards affiliated with that Tower.

"So, that is why..." (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung formed a content but suspicious-looking smile as she sneakily scratched Sae-Jin's thighs.

"If Oppa works just a bit harder... We might be able to grow at a tremendous rate, am I right?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

Her hands became a bit more strange and daring. So, Sae-Jin smirked a little, and...

"In that case, I'll decide who gets to become the Tower Lord."

...And, he reopened the negotiations.

Yu Sae-Jung's eyes trembled like a newborn chick.

Chapter 153

The Entry (1)

The ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the end of the construction work for the Dawn and TM's new Wizard Tower was taking place at the site of the Tower located in Seoul's Seocho-Gu. The identities of every single audience member present were who's who of biggest corporations out there. For instance, people like TM's CEO, Jo Hahn-Sung, and from the Dawn's side, the sole grandchild of its Chairman, Yu Sae-Jung. (*TL: A "-Gu" is a district and it's bigger than a "-Dong" which is a suburb.*)

"The Knight Yu Sae-Jung's the representative from the Dawn, huh."

This Wizard Tower was built in the city of Seoul. This inevitably meant that it would compete against the Seoul Wizard Tower, widely seen as the Seoul's best, and consequently, Korea's best Tower. So, the Director of the Seoul Tower personally came here to gauge the flow of atmosphere around these parts.

The Tower Director spoke from behind the heavily-tinted car window while looking at Yu Sae-Jung.

"Jo Hahn-Sung from TM... They must be expecting great things, since Kim Sae-Jin's right hand man is here in person."

"Yes. It's quite likely that both TM and the Dawn has poured all their resources into this venture."

Within the financial circles, Jo Hahn-Sung was well known for his straightforward personality and tenacious drive to succeed, which made him a man others should not mess with. But that wasn't the only reason.

Kim Sae-Jin's most trusted adviser.

The title alone easily sunk all the other qualifications the man named Jo Hahn-Sung possessed into insignificance.

From the huge-scale national defense business supported by the likes of Griffins and

a Kraken, to creating artifacts; from Orc's miraculous weapons to Mana Tattoos, etc, etc – all of them, indispensable abilities that the current world could not do without.

If one were to call the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong as the true icon of innovation in the modern Wizardry, then Kim Sae-Jin should be seen as the symbol of the modern world itself.

It was all very strange.

Now normally, the public came down hard on those folks who earned a good deal of wealth and political power through their Traits only. However, Kim Sae-Jin was the only exception to that strict rule.

Maybe, that was due to the ‘special’ circumstances – currently, Boss Monsters appeared several times a month so if there was no Kim Sae-Jin, the country of Korea would’ve ceased to exist in this world a long time ago.

Without him, there would not be the Orc’s weapons to satisfy the demands for quality armaments by the Knights, not to mention those artifacts that could increase the chances of their survival by 90%, either.

And also, it was the same sort of story for the Griffins, responsible for drastically reducing the amount of time required for the dispatched Knights to arrive on the scene – introduction of Griffins that could figuratively arrive virtually as soon as being dispatched, was referred to as ‘revolution’ in policing – as well as the worldwide defense service that raised the status of Korea internationally, the Kraken.

Kim Sae-Jin was an existence that burned like the light coming from a lone guiding star within this dangerous and treacherous world.

For a man like that to enter the business of Wizard Towers... Now that was the advent of an unexpected calamity for all potential competitors.

“I heard the rumours of the Vice Tower Lord Heming sending in his resume over that side.”

The Seoul Tower Director creased his forehead. The more he thought about it, the more irritated he got. That bat-like son of a gun...

“...The Vice Tower Lord Heming tendered his resignation yesterday.”

"Hah, based on what? Surely, he hadn't heard anything concrete from them yet."

"According to the Tower Lord, he said he will bet on him walking away a winner with this move when he resigned from his post. Apparently."

"...Winning? Sounds more like gambling."

The Tower Director's sigh clung to the car window's glass and became a sheen of white frost. Although it was definitely Spring, the temperature was still on the colder side.

"Oh well. The projections for the future should be rosy for them, right?"

".....Indeed, yes. The only demerit is them only having 100 or so grimoires, but 25 of them happen to be books that not even an entire year's worth of research into a single volume will be enough to determine their true value..."

The true worth of a grimoire wasn't simply about 'learning a single magic spell contained within'.

No, the most prominent meaning of its existence was all to do with creating other types of spells, by applying the logic and composition of the original spell contained within the pages of a grimoire.

Considering that point alone, no one could assign any arbitrary value to those grimoires written by the revolutionary genius, the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong. With a single volume of his work, 10 grimoires with different spells could be created. However, within the new Wizard Tower, it held all 25 volumes, so it was only a matter of time before the collection grew into 250 books, then to 2500 books...

"Mm?"

It was then. The Seoul Wizard Tower's Director spotted a man watching the ribbon cutting ceremony from afar. He seemed familiar – sculpted physique, sleek and long legs; strong jawline and a sharp nose; even though he wore a pair of sunglasses and a mask, there was no way his handsome visage could be hidden away.

The Director had seen that face hundreds, thousands of times before, so he instantly recognised the man. It was a secret no one else had any clue of, but the Tower Director 'Joseph Jin' just so happened to be one of Kim Sae-Jin's most ardent fans out there.

“...Wait for a second.”

The Tower Director hurriedly opened the car’s door and approached that man. That man tilted his head in confusion when an unknown person came up to him.

“By any chance, are you Mister Kim Sae-Jin?”

Just under his sunglasses, signs of panic could be seen.



Kim Sae-Jin talked about various things with the Director of Seoul Wizard Tower who had quite unexpectedly managed to spot him. And unlike the popular belief that everyone from a Wizard Tower were egocentric fools with too much pride, the Director was actually quite a principled man.

Their conversation went well and Sae-Jin even found his dignified attitude likeable, even – all of that was due to the man’s passion clearly imbued within the way he gestured and talked.

“Here. It’s a present.” (Sae-Jin)

So, Sae-Jin gave away the thing he brought along to use as a PR material today.

“What is it?”

The Tower Director fixed his frameless glasses and took a closer look at the book given to him. There was nothing written on the cover, other than the alphabets and numbers “No. 26”.

Number 26, 26th, the number being 26...

While saying the same thing over and over again, the Tower Director belatedly realised what this was and his expression changed into one of pure panic.

“This, this is...?!”

“Please, use it well. There are only 17 of this 26th grimoire in the world – 18, if you count that one as well.” (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin spoke as he smiled. The 26th grimoire strided the boundary existing between magic and sorcery – it featured ‘Meteor’, a spell that would’ve never been revived in the modern world if it weren’t for the Bathory’s knowledge on sorcery and the Leviathan’s Mana Body combining their might together.

This powerful legendary spell that occupied the top spot in the fire-based element magic, would no doubt leave behind a huge crater in the world of magic very soon.

“Uh... Uh, uh..... But, h, how can I receive something this valuable...”

The hands of the Tower Director were shaking like leaves.

“Please, take it. There aren’t that many Wizards who can learn this spell around the world anyway.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin deliberately chose an attacking magic for his new grimoire. He hoped that this would help at least a little bit during the Kim Yu-Sohn-prophesied ‘the Great Calamity of Monsters’ in the future.

Fearing that Vampires might get their hands on it and abuse the spell, Sae-Jin was planning to select 17 Wizard Towers that had Tower Lords capable of learning this Meteor spell and personally hand it over to them. However, not one Korean Wizard Tower was included in his original plan. But well, another copy could be made any time, so it wasn’t a problem.

“Please, take it. Well then, I should get going.” (Sae-Jin)

“Eh? Ah, t, thank you very much!! Actually, I, I’m a big fan of yours!”

“Really? In that case, thank you for your support.” (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin lightly tapped the shoulders of the heavily-trembling Director, and headed towards the ribbon cutting ceremony while cutting open a path through the walls of reporters like an unstoppable tank.

When a tall man suddenly barged his way through, inevitably reporters began spitting out their dissatisfied remarks.

And so, when he arrived around the middle of the way, Kim Sae-Jin removed the sunglasses and stared at Yu Baek-Song.

Since he didn't tell her he was planning to show up, panic was quickly overtaking her expressions as the countless camera lenses turned towards him.

He walked confidently within the path created by the reporters. While thinking about trivial things, such as wondering if this was what Moses was feeling during that famous moment, he walked next to Yu Sae-Jung and took his spot there. Then, he gazed at her and formed the brightest smile he had ever worn until now.

"I'm sure some of *them* will notice with this much?" (Sae-Jin)

".....Awoo, really now. You should've told me beforehand, you know." (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung spoke in a fake criticising voice, yet her face was blossoming with a huge smile.

Thanks to Kim Sae-Jin's unexpected arrival, the ceremony was a roaring success.



"The Vampire Lord's whereabouts might be deep underground," said Rhosrahdel.

His voice lacked energy. Also, both his eyes were blackened, and almost half of his hair had been plucked out. It seemed that he had to pay a heavy price for ruining Bathory's speech during the exhibition's final show.

"Underground where?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin handed over a boiled egg as she asked. With a practiced hand, Rhosrahdel massaged his eyes with the egg.

"Under the Gangwon Province's Monster field. Remember the place that got created when two Fissures overlapped each other and the earth's crust got distorted?" (Rhosrahdel)

"Ah!! That place where Mana couldn't be used at all?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

As if she had recalled it, Yi Hye-Rin spoke up while clapping her hands. Hearing this, Kim Yu-Rin's face too began drowning in memories. Well, that was the place where she got to meet the Orc for the first time, after all.

"Right. Apparently, the Lord is performing research underground with his most faithful retainers." (Rhosrahdel)

"What kind of a research?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

"I don't know. They are doing something, alright." (Rhosrahdel)

".....Guild Master? What should we do now?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin asked Sae-Jin while looking at him. Sae-Jin thought for a while, before shifting his gaze to Kim Sun-Ho. Kim Sun-Ho passed the baton over to Joo Ji-Hyuk. Then, Joo Ji-Hyuk passed it onto...

Well, the person at the end of the chain of stares turned out to be Kim Yu-Rin after all. She sighed out grandly.

"Ha-ah..."

"Can't be helped, really. Captain's the only one with enough experience on planning and conducting raids amongst us here." (Yi Hye-Rin)

"I get it, I get it. Let's take a look at the map first." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin took a look at the map of the interior Rhosrahdel brought along. The most eye-catching thing on it was the passage displayed, and it was located quite close to the East Sea's coastline. They might be able to utilise the Leviathan's strength at this rate.

Two methods immediately came up on Kim Yu-Rin's mind once she thought about using this lengthy passage to enter the base. They could bore a hole on the ground and poke their heads in, or quietly infiltrate...

Rhosrahdel added a few words as she deliberated.

"Ah, I forgot. Bathory told me to contact her as soon as the planning is complete. She said she will help." (Rhosrahdel)

"Really? Then, that's fin... Wait. Didn't you say that the Lord can 'see everything'? He probably has seen you coming here to meet us. Doesn't that mean we are busted already?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin asked.

“Ah. That only applies to the Vampires that had sworn the oath.” (Rhosrahdel)

“The oath?”

“It happened really a long time ago. Remember the Vampire cleansing that happened in the past? Vampires found out that it was definitely an inside job. So, those who somehow survived the cleansing, wanted to make sure the traitors pay the appropriate price, but well, since there weren’t a lot of Vampires remaining, someone cooked up the idea of ‘Let’s not kill our own kins when there’s so little number to begin with, and instead, swear an oath of never betraying our kind and entrust our lives to the Lord...’ However, I am a child born after the racial cleansing had come to an end. So, I am not affected by this blood oath.” (Rhosrahdel)

“A child...?!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin stared at Rhosrahdel with eyes that screamed contempt and her failure to understand his claims.

“Don’t be like that, since I’m the youngest of everyone here. Both Knight Kim Yu-Rin and Wizard Hazeline have shot past their 30s already, no? I’m still in my 20s, you know.”

The two people who got dragged into the conversation unexpectedly began gritting their teeth. A violent desire to murder burned fiercely in their eyes. Rhosrahdel whistled nonchalantly and avoided their eyes.

“But still. Vampires would die from that by getting caught in it if they are unlucky, right? Even Nosferatus?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Nope, that’s not it either. I hear that the Lord is way too busy doing his research underground that he has no time to check and stuff.” (Rhosrahdel)

“So, in other words, there is no problem, is that it? Well, then how about we do it like this? Everyone, please listen to this...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin began explaining the plan she cooked up in this short amount of time. It was quite a bit complex plan, too. And this plan required the presences of excavators, the Leviathan, the Kraken, etc, etc. However, once everyone heard of it, it sounded

quite doable, so they ended up nodding their heads in approval.

“It’s good, Captain.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“As expected. It’s not for nothing people chant ‘Kim Yu-Rin, Kim Yu-Rin’ all the time.”

“Haha, you are overestimating me. Well then, Guild Master, should we go with this plan?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Yes, let’s.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin gave his permission.

Tting!!

It was then, the elevator door to the conference room opened up, and a woman with white hair that kinda, sorta resembled a middle schooler belatedly arrived.

“Here I am. What’s up?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“Oh, Miss Yu Baek-Song. Please take a seat. There’s a plan we need to explain to you.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin proceeded to explain the plan once more to Yu Baek-Song. However, the little white tiger suddenly tilted her head in confusion, and then, poured the proverbial cold water on their parade.

“Why the heck is it so complicated? If you know the coordinates, you can just enter with the sorcery, no? Hey Kim Sae-Jin, that sorcery thing you used to teleport us, can’t you use that again?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“.....”

“.....”

“.....”

How come they haven’t thought of that simple idea?

A thick silence mixed with self mockery descended upon the conference room.

Chapter 154

The Entry (2)

- *It has been now confirmed that the excerpt from the grimoire number 26, written personally by the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong, does mention 'balls of flame descending from the distant skies'. Opinions of experts in the Wizarding community are divided regarding those words that invoke the images of the spell 'Meteor', but even until now, the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong has not revealed the true name of the spell yet.*
- *This new Bangbae-Dong grimoire that has caused yet another huge stir in the world is planned to be distributed to the Dawn & TM Wizard Tower first; experts believe this will only serve to increase the number of Wizards buttering up to Dawn & TM Tower...*

Things were still chaotic for the media and TV stations. The interest and fervor of the Wizards directed towards the new grimoire were just that huge. It was understandable, since the book was rumoured to contain the recreation of a certain legendary spell, after all.

Whatever the case might have been, thanks to this grimoire alone, the number of applicants for the Dawn & TM's Wizard Tower reached 6785, which excluded the applicants from other countries. If one considered the fact that the total number of Wizards in Korea did not exceed 80000, it was indeed an enormous figure – but even then, that was the figure with the Wizards below C class and judged to be lacking in potential and talent were eliminated from the counting process. In other words, the remaining ones were the cream of the crop.

And so, Yu Sae-Jung was spending everyday on the proverbial cloud nine after getting the acknowledgment from her grandfather for her business acumen – but well, Sae-Jin himself wasn't all that interested in it, personally speaking.

"Still haven't received the coordinates yet?" (Sae-Jin)

A meeting was being held in the secret conference room located below the Guild's HQ.

"Please wait for a moment. I have received the coordinates but, as for the mental images of the interior... Ah, I've received them, master!" (Rhosrahdel) (*TL: For the*

record, Rhosrahdel isn't calling Sae-Jin master as in Guild Master, but as his "owner". Hence, I didn't use capital M.)

Rhosrahdel smiled brightly at Sae-Jin. However, the title this young Vampire used to call Sae-Jin got on his nerves a bit, so his forehead creased up quite deeply.

"How many times do I have to tell you not to call me master?" (Sae-Jin)

"If it's not that, then how should I address you? Since I'm not a Guild member, I can't even call you Guild Master..." (Rhosrahdel)

Rhosrahdel complained while revealing a bit of his real intent. However, it was Yi Hye-Rin who suppressed that sly request to join the Guild.

Slap!!

That was the sound of a palm smashing into a person's back.

"Stop muttering nonsense and tell us the coordinates already." (Yi Hye-Rin)

"Ah-euh, that hurts. Seriously... Fine, fine." (Rhosrahdel)

Rhosrahdel jotted down the coordinates on a piece of paper, and then transmitted the mental images of the cavern's interior to Sae-Jin via their link. Sae-Jin closed his eyes and studied the interior for a bit, memorising good spots where they could hide in.

"Is that okay, master?" (Rhosrahdel)

"...Yeah, sure. Good enough." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin opened his eyes with a long sigh. At the same time, Rhosrahdel's face went rigid. It seemed that he had received a new telepathic message from Bathory.

"What?" (Sae-Jin)

"Well, master." (Rhosrahdel)

"...Stop calling me a master already." (Sae-Jin)

"Bathory says to come over to where she is." (Rhosrahdel)

“Okay, then. Get going.” (Sae-Jin)

“No, I mean, not me... She wants master to come over.” (Rhosrahdel)

Sae-Jin tilted his head.

“Why so suddenly?” (Sae-Jin)

“I’ve no clue.” (Rhosrahdel)



After receiving the *summons*, Sae-Jin went to the former underground city of Nosferatus which now belonged to Bathory.

“May 6th? Cool. I’ll help you.” (Bathory)

“...And how do you plan to do that, exactly?” (Sae-Jin)

“I’ll call out all the retainers working with the Lord on his research or whatever, telling them there’s something urgent we need to take care of.” (Bathory)

She gave out a rather insincere answer.

“And how will you call them out?” (Sae-Jin)

“I’ll take care of that, so you don’t have to worry your little mind, mkay? Heum~, hmm~~.” (Bathory)

Her attitude was way to discourteous. Sae-Jin’s forehead creased up automatically after seeing her busy messing around with her smartphone, considering that she was the one who wanted him here.

“What are you so busy with?” (Sae-Jin)

“Oh, I’m just checking out a couple of articles online. These ants are so adorable, you know? Hey, here, this number next to this thumb-up sign, that’s telling me the number of ants agreeing with this opinion praising me, right?” (Bathory)

She pointed at the phone’s screen and asked him. There was a comment section

attached to an article praising Emil Rerheu's martial prowess, and 7300 were agreeing with it, while 3400 weren't.

"Yeah, correct." (Sae-Jin)

"So, that means 7300 likes Emil Rerheu. Good. But what about these 3400? Can you found out who they are?" (Bathory)

"What will you do if you find them?" (Sae-Jin)

"Kill them, of course." (Bathory)

"....."

All those anonymous somebodies living somewhere were now in danger of being murdered by the origin of all things evil, just because they touched the wrong spot on the screen of their phones...

"Hey, I am just kidding you. It's a joke. So stop forming such a serious expression, you idiot." (Bathory)

Bathory smirked and put her phone down, then handed a box over to Sae-Jin. It was an ancient and old-fashioned box that wouldn't have been out of place if it were found within the pages of Old Testament.

"And this is?" (Sae-Jin)

"The Lord's weakness is inside. It's nothing much, just a gift wishing for your success, is all." (Bathory)

"...A weakness?" (Sae-Jin)

"Yup. Even if he is the Lord, because he's so old now, all his senses, including eyesight, hearing, whatever, are in steep decline. Even the might of his 'eyes that see everything' is no longer what it used to be. Well~, even if you fail to carry out your plans, I'd love it if you still manage to get rid of that eye for me. It's so annoying, see?" (Bathory)

Sae-Jin cautiously opened the lid, trying not to damage the box. A silver knife glistened coldly within the black interior.

“Silver?” (Sae-Jin)

“Right. But it’s not a regular silver, nope. It’s *the* silver refined by my homeworld’s much more powerful sunlight, you know? Now normally, a Vampire has two weaknesses – sunlight and silver. This here is the thing combining both of those.” (Bathory)

“If that’s the case...” (Sae-Jin)

Grasping the knife, Sae-Jin glared at Bathory with the unreadable light in his eyes. After sensing his intent, Bathory’s eyes arched slightly. But she wasn’t angry or anything like that.

“Even if those are Vampire’s weaknesses, we can’t even feel them when we are young and full of vitality. But the Lord is different. He’s really old, you see. If you cut him with that knife, his flesh will start rotting away. And he won’t be able to regenerate himself even with a single cut.” (Bathory)

“Hmph.”

Sae-Jin wielded the silver knife this way and that. It had a really plain exterior. It looked like he should slice steak with it instead of a person’s flesh – and even then, since ‘rare’ was too tough, maybe ‘well-done’ instead.

After watching him for a bit with a satisfied smile on her face, Bathory added some cautionary words as well.

“Hey kid. You shouldn’t take this too lightly. The Lord has achieved the peak of all peaks in Chimera engineering, you know?”

And with that, she poured in all her focus back on the smartphone. Seeing her fingers quickly fidgeting away, Sae-Jin wondered whether she was trying to manipulate the public sentiment all by herself or not.

Sae-Jin smirked and spoke.

“I’m leaving.” (Sae-Jin)

“.....”

Bathory didn't bother to reply – only the sounds of that unique SFX of the phone's onscreen keyboard being pressed echoed in the silence.



The date was set ten days from now, on 20th of April.

Although he acted all relaxed and ready, the pressure emanating from the title 'Vampire Lord' wasn't something Sae-Jin could carelessly receive at all. Unable to do anything about the heaviness weighing down on his heart, Sae-Jin ended up taking a stroll through the underground village of Nosferatus.

Set up next to the Goblin's village, the base for the Nosferatus actually was quite beautiful to look at. An old-school castle, seemingly plucked straight out from medieval times, stood tall enough to pierce the ceilings, and the more 'normal' looking stone and brick houses surrounded it.

A 'city' built within the darkness, a spitting image of their home back in their original world. To Vampires that hated sunlight, this might as well be their one true paradise.

"You will succeed." (Lillia)

While he was quietly taking it all in, Lillia approached Sae-Jin and handed over a mug of coffee.

Did he look that troubled? Sae-Jin forced out a smile.

"I should hope so." (Sae-Jin)

"No, you will succeed. The Lord will die, and everyone will return safe and sound. Mister Sae-Jin will return home, reminisce and write on his diary – it'll be like that sort of... a happy ending. Of course, there should be some other complications, though." (Lillia)

An imperceptible smile spread on Sae-Jin's lips. He sipped on the coffee and asked her about something he was curious about.

"By the way, how's the life down here?" (Sae-Jin)

It was impossible for Vampires to absorb nutrition through any other means except

through drinking blood. It was because, besides the mouth and oesophagus, a Vampire did not possess other digestive organs. They were born with a completely different structure of the body, as well as the methods of survival, compared to regular human beings.

Maybe, it was an inevitability that Vampires would end up being the enemy of mankind.

However, Sae-Jin thought that in the modern world, there was no such a thing as inevitability and all that.

The current Earth and the world which the level of science hadn't even caught up to Earth's Middle Ages – and where the Vampires originated from – couldn't even be compared at all. No matter how much magic and Mana rampaged about, the accumulated pool of scientific knowledge still managed to exist in the modern world.

Not only the science didn't get swept aside via the advent of Mana, it survived, and even marched further forward thanks to injection of magic and Mana as the basis for technology to revolutionise.

That was why, there was no 'impossibility' in the modern world.

No, there were only 'the things that haven't been tried yet' and 'the things that have been tried before'.

So, Sae-Jin decided to come up with new sources of nutrients for Vampire's exclusive consumption. This idea came about after realising the simple truth about Vampires being able to drink potions.

And that vague outline of an idea finally bore fruit in the form of a prototype liquid after six months of arduous research.

A magical liquid that sent all the necessary nutrients to the entire body as soon it was drunk.

With this much, Vampires should no longer feel the disgust towards drinking bovine or swine blood.

Of course, Wizards capable of handling Mana were required during the manufacturing process, but as it was mentioned before, there were 6785 applicants wishing to join

TM's Wizard Tower, so...

And Nosferatus went on a drive to improve their diet with the aid of this drink.

"There are a few of us who find it difficult to adjust, but it's better than expected. We're moving forward nicely." (Lillia)

"That's a relief to hear. I'm planning to add the flavour of 'meat', something I hear you have never tasted before until now, so please do look forward to it." (Sae-Jin)

Well, a few Wizards might have to slave away like crazy, though.

"Fuhut. That's a nice news to hear. Yes, I'll look forward to it." (Lillia)

"Chief Lillia! Over here, please!"

From somewhere, a man's loud shout came towards them. Lillia smiled after hearing that shout containing that person's scent, and stood up from her seat.

"Then, I shall be on my way. Mister Sae-Jin should also return home – although, it's fine if you want to stay for a while longer, too." (Lillia)

Her voice was gentle and kind.

He followed suit and got up as well.

"Sure, take care. I should also get going now." (Sae-Jin)

Lillia left, and Sae-Jin headed off to the exit located on the opposite side to the underground village.

Then, a certain thought popped up in his head.

'...How did she know that I keep a diary?'

However, his legs moved again towards the exit after he told himself that her words simply meant those everyday routines, like wash your face before going to bed, etc, etc.



The giant called time took hefty strides forward and before long, ten days flew by at the blink of an eye; the date today was 20th of April.

The day they were waiting for.

The members about to participate in this plan gathered in the underground conference room while decked out in expensive artifacts like some kind of Christmas trees.

“Hang on, wouldn’t each one of us reach a value of close to a billion dollars, dressed like this?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin muttered loudly as she rubbed the belt-style high-class artifact. Most likely, she tried to diffuse the tension with her question.

“A billion is too much, so maybe 500 million?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“Combine Mana Tattoos to that and any one of us shoots past a billion, easy. I mean, the inflation nowadays is so crazy during these uncertain times.” (Kim Sun-Ho)

Yu Baek-Song and Kim Sun-Ho replied. Sae-Jin chuckled a little bit, before changing into the Leviathan.

“Let’s cut the chit chat and get going. Please gather around.” (Sae-Jin)

“Wha? What the?!”

“You can speak even in the Leviathan’s appearance?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin asked out aloud after hearing the Leviathan’s charmingly baritone voice.

“Yes, I can. But let’s talk about that later and gather around me. In order to raise the accuracy, you guys need to stick close to me.” (Sae-Jin)

Remembering the first time they moved via instant transmission, where their faces ended up slamming into the ground, the members quickly sneaked up next to Sae-Jin’s position. And then, they slowly closed their eyes while feeling the surprisingly soft and squishy scales of the Leviathan.

Sae-Jin also closed his eyes. After recalling the coordinates once more, he also recalled the images of the cavern's interior he memorised earlier, as well.

"Here we go." (Sae-Jin)

Suddenly, a strong dizziness swept by his brain.

But that was only for a short moment. The party staggered while opening their eyes. The thick darkness welcomed them.

Sae-Jin reverted back to his human appearance while looking at the far end of the lengthy cavern. No matter how powerful the Leviathan was, it was simply far too slow outside the body of water.

"Whew... Okay, let's go. From now on, Knight Kim Yu-Rin will take the lead." (Sae-Jin)

"Right. Everyone, Be very quiet and follow me. Remain mindful of how you breathe, even." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Following right behind Kim Yu-Rin, the party walked forward in the darkness. Not even five minutes had passed by, yet their faces were soaked in sweat from the taut tension gripping them tightly.

And another hour passed by like that.

SFX for strange vibrations

An ominous tremor spread into their ears. Kim Yu-Rin was hurriedly trying to shout out in alarm, but...

But before she could, the darkness bleached out and the space got flipped on her.

Kim Yu-Rin had to close her eyes for a moment and reopen them due the blinding whiteness.

The pure white that tormented her eyes had been replaced by a deep navy blue. Worse still, she couldn't spot the rest of the party that should've been there with her in this new space.

That was, with the exception of Kim Sae-Jin.

With a flustered face, Sae-Jin spoke while looking at Kim Yu-Rin.

“Looks like the Lord has caught onto us.” (Sae-Jin)

Kim Yu-Rin surveyed the surroundings with a frustrated face.

“Seems like it.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

It was right then.

The Lord’s voice reverberated through the cavern.

Two people present heard it clearly, the words...

– An Orc, and a human. Welcome.

...The words uttered out by the Lord.

Chapter 155

The Entry (3)

- The Orc and the human, is it. I've enjoyed witnessing the destruction of my creation by your hands.

“...?”

Kim Yu-Rin's head tilted sideways.

She heard the Lord's voice just fine, but failed to understand the meaning of his words. The Orc and the human the Vampire Lord had mentioned – well, the *human* was here, so where was the Orc? She took a look behind her, but beside the thick darkness, no such thing as an Orc existed nearby.

While observing the changes in her mood from the side, Sae-Jin wiped the cold sweat off from his forehead.

- And what brings you to my abode?

Fortunately for Sae-Jin, the Lord's dignified voice changed the topic quickly enough. Feeling hurried now, Sae-Jin tried to move towards the direction of the voice quickly, but Kim Yu-Rin didn't follow suit. No, she instead reached out and grabbed Sae-Jin's wrist firmly in order to stop him, before throwing a question at the Lord.

“What did you mean by that just now?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

- Regarding which matter?

“Just now, you said ‘the Orc and the human’. ‘Humans’ are here, but where is this Orc you mentioned?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

- Hmm...

The Lord's lengthy and low-pitched murmuring seemed to stick to the walls of the cavern like some sticky glue.

“Answer me.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

– Although I did not expect you to address me with honorifics... Still, don't you think your attitude is a little troublesome, human?

It seemed that the Lord didn't care for Kim Yu-Rin's attitude at all.

“.....Hah.”

Her face hardened rather coldly. How dare he seek decorum after he drove the world to the brink of destruction? She gritted her teeth and pulled out Gungnir.

“In that case, allow me to beat you up and make you spit it out.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

– As expected, even though the world may be different, humans are still arrogant and conceited...

“Shut up. Let's go, Guild Master.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin shouted out confrontationally and took the lead. Sae-Jin quietly followed after her.

So, the two people walked in the passage while scything through the darkness. The more they walked, the stronger the sensation of the passage widening became.

For sure, the interior of the cavern was indeed changing. To be more specific, the narrow and lengthy shape of the terrain was gradually opening up.

And they must have walked nonstop for the next hour or so.

Finally, the two of them were able to step into a huge open space.

“Huh. Really now. Just how much further should we keep walking?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin scratched the back of his neck and groaned. Kim Yu-Rin stared at him with a gentle smile, then spoke to him while surveying this huge open area.

“But still, I am relieved.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“.....About?” (Sae-Jin)

“Seeing that the Lord is within this passage, it’s most likely our path is the correct one. And out of everyone in the team, we’re the strongest, after all.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

As expected of Kim Yu-Rin and her selfless personality, she believed it was a fortunate thing for them to face the strong and difficult opponent instead of others. Sae-Jin chuckled and his hand automatically rose up towards her head. Then, he went *Oops* and stopped himself in the middle. The old habit of the Hero Orc, patting her head every now and then, almost broke out by mistake.

“Excuse me...?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

And the eyes of Kim Yu-Rin staring at him also widened in real time as well. He quickly withdrew his hand and coughed awkwardly.

“Ah, my apologies... For you being a bit of a shorty.” (Sae-Jin)

...And he tried to turn it around with a bit of humour.

“...I’m 168 centimetres tall. If this is too short for you, then how tall should a woman be?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin narrowed her eyes and complained. But seeing her cheeks redden a bit, he couldn’t help but wonder if she liked being treated like a young kid. Of course, he threw away that idea quickly enough, though.

He pointed towards the far end of the passage and spoke.

“I am just kidding with you. Regardless, let’s hurry. It’s not good to be too tense, but it’s also equally bad being too rela...” (Sae-Jin)

KHUUOONG!!

Before he could finish his sentence, the entire terrain shook violently.

Kwahng! Kwahng!

Right after that, powerful shock waves spread out as if something was trying to break out from the underground.

“Get ready for battle!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin's occupational habit reared its head again. She shoved Sae-Jin behind her and unsheathed the sword.

Kwajeeck!!

At the same time, the surface of the floor cracked open, and something massive climbed out from the gap. First to show up were two *hands* the size of an adult person, and just behind those huge hands, a pair of heads with their own pairs of blood-red eyes attached could be seen.

It was an Ogre.

Of course, it was on a different level compared to a normal Ogre. First of all, there was the thing with the number of its heads, and next, the shape of one of the heads it possessed. One head was that of an regular Ogre, but the other one just so happened to be that of a Cerberus, the guardian of hell's gate.

"Looks like it received a head from an annoying guard dog." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin's expression crumpled. The Monster really was that disgusting to look at. But still, she couldn't overlook its potential power, now that a Cerberus and an Ogre had been combined into one. She gripped her Gungnir real tightly while glaring at the Ogre.

Shareureureuk-

And as she was searching for the Monster's weakness, a transparent and light beam-like energy descended on top of her head.

"...Mm?"

She even forgot about her nervousness and exclaimed out. When that spectral light entered her body, her entire being felt much lighter than before, and the flow of Mana within her blood vessels received a huge boost.

She turned to look at the person responsible for this, Kim Sae-Jin. He replied her quizzical look with a warm smile that even made her fluster just a little bit.

"It's a buff spell. Please go ahead. I'll support you with magic from the rear." (Sae-Jin)

He then morphed into the Leviathan Form.

"Thank you." (Kim Yu-Rin)

A Leviathan had her back – deriving the utmost confidence from that fact alone, Kim Yu-Rin lunged towards the Ogre.

SFX for the Ogre's roar

The Ogre roared out and violently swung its jet-black club.

Khoung!!

A sword emitting the brilliant golden light clashed with an unbreakable blunt instrument made out of black metal. An indescribable explosion resounded out from the contact point. A huge crater caved in on the ground, and from within the thick, choking dust cloud, seeds of flame sparkled threateningly.

Only a single strike caused such a memorable scene.

Soon enough, though, the dust cloud cleared away and the result became also clear for all to see.

And that was the Ogre and his missing right arm, its black metal club also gone for good.

Kim Yu-Rin pounced on the suffering Ogre that was in agony after losing its arm. Her whole body felt like it was two, no, three times purer and overflowing with strength, thanks to Sae-Jin's incomparable buff magic.

This feeling, she wanted to keep feeling it for the rest of her life.



The appearance of the Two-Headed Ogre was merely the beginning. But they could defeat other Monsters without too much issues. According to Kim Yu-Rin, it was because of their 'fantastic teamwork', apparently. Nominally it was a teamwork, but all Sae-Jin did was to support her with buff magic, actually.

Of course, the level of Sae-Jin's spell was way too high to label it as a simple 'support

magic'. As the 'sorcery' formed the foundation for this difficult buff spell, Sae-Jin had to morph into the Leviathan Form just in order to maintain it. And its effects were just as excellent, too.

Anyways.

As they eliminated various Chimeras that tried to block their path and continued on forward, they eventually encountered a rather suspicious-looking door.

Even with a single, casual look, it was an old-fashioned and dignified door that screamed "The Final Boss is here!!"

Strange figures painted in white colour decorated the black door.

"...Shall we?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin asked, and Sae-Jin wordlessly grabbed the door handle.

I wanted to open it, though, Kim Yu-Rin lightly complained and nodded her head. Sae-Jin chuckled slightly and pushed the door open.

SFX for the creaky sound of a door opening

The door issued a worn-out creak as it opened. Past the doorway, the very first thing they spotted was an old man wearing a black robe that seemed tattered and dishevelled. Then, they saw his energy-less drooping shoulders and the white eyes that had lost vitality a long time ago.

He was blind as well.

"His eyes..." (Sae-Jin)

Only then, Sae-Jin realised why the Lord failed to show himself even though Nosferatus were openly rebelling, as well as when Bathory showed signs of suspicious behaviour.

A leader of the organisation that couldn't be of any help for the said organisation was no longer acknowledged as the leader. There were only two possible endings waiting for such a person – one, get eaten by the challenger, or two, retire on his own volition.

“I heard you possessed eyes that could see everything.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin taunted and pointed the tip of her Gungnir at the Lord’s neck.

The Lord stared at the two of them with those eyes that couldn’t see nor reflect anything. However, although they might have lost their original functions, it sure felt like his eyes could still decipher the truths of all things regardless.

“As you can see, my eyes have lost their clarity already.” (The Vampire Lord)

The Lord’s phlegm-laden voice sounded calm and stable, yet the tone indicated he was sternly admonishing the pair of intruders before him. That was quite evident from the smouldering rage hidden in his calm appearance.

“...That means, we can get rid of you quite easily, no?” (Sae-Jin)

This time, Sae-Jin spoke up. He grasped the Bathory’s gift tightly and got ready to pounce on the Lord. However, Kim Yu-Rin stretched her arm out and stopped him. Her face said that she somehow managed to remember just now the question she had nearly forgotten about.

“There’s something I’m curious about.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“And what would that be?” (The Vampire Lord)

In that moment, Sae-Jin’s face became dyed in panic. The question she wanted to ask the Lord was quite obvious, really. Obviously...

“You clearly said, the Orc and the human when we came here. Are you saying that the Orc is here too? And which Orc are you referring to, when you said the Orc?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“.....”

The Lord maintained his silence. Meanwhile, Sae-Jin changed back into the Leviathan Form. He was thinking of firing off the Mana cannon and killing the Lord before he opened his mouth.

Unfortunately, though – that ended up being the bad move on his part.

"Indeed, a measly human with a Trait that allows you to transform into many other lifeforms. Seeing it with my own eyes, it is truly interesting." (The Vampire Lord)

The Lord's words seemed to strike home way too accurately for a blind man.

"Oh, the Lady Knight, what are you even talking about? The Orc resides within that man. I have remembered his appearance especially so, because he was in his Orc form when he slew my Chimera. That is why I have referred to this man as the Orc." (The Vampire Lord)

"....."

Instantly, all of Kim Yu-Rin's movement ceased up.

SFX for the sound of winds blowing

A cold and ominous wind blew in from the wide open doorway. As if that coldness had woken her up, Kim Yu-Rin turned her head towards Sae-Jin's direction. Within her enlarged eyes, several emotions, such as confusion, surprise, a sense of betrayal, etc, etc, swirled about crazily.

Even though Sae-Jin could feel her eyes staring at him, he continued to wordlessly study the Lord.

As the silence flowed thickly between the two, the Lord eventually opened his mouth again.

"Perchance, she did not know? I wonder why." (The Vampire Lord)

".....Just, what does this mean?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

She finally opened her mouth, too, and asked. However, the recipient of that question wasn't the Vampire Lord, but Kim Sae-Jin.

Only then, Sae-Jin turned his head towards her and met her eyes.

He could see the reflection of the Leviathan within her trembling pupils. Suddenly, he thought he looked disgusting for some reason. So, he reverted back to his human appearance.

He gritted his teeth and shifted his glare back at the Lord, and then spoke up.

"He's attempting to drive a wedge between us. Do not be mislead." (Sae-Jin)

"Drive a wedge? What can you possibly mean by that?" (The Vampire Lord)

Unfortunately, the Lord interfered. With an insidious and sly smile on his face, to boot.

"Oh, the Lady Knight. Truth always leaves crumbs of evidence behind. And you should have been faintly aware of those evidence crumbs by now." (The Vampire Lord)

Kim Yu-Rin's eyes remained fixed on Sae-Jin while the Lord's words entered her ears.

And so, she began recalling things one by one.

Her prior suspicion regarding the small insignia placed on the Orc Blacksmith's weapons that Sae-Jin had crafted, that could be also found on the Hero Orc's weapon; that strangely firm belief the Orc had in Kim Sae-Jin; those habits Sae-Jin unconsciously exhibited that were so, so similar to that of the Orc; and finally, his Trait where he could change into a Monster...

At the same time, all the questions she held deep inside flooded back out.

All those questions she had suppressed with the single thought, 'it's not possible', bubbled back up to the surface once more.

"Mister Guild Master." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin's face hardened, but she didn't speak any further. She used silence to pressure Sae-Jin.

Should he tell her the truth? But honestly, he felt hesitant to do so. After all, those actions he performed without giving it much thought as the Orc would be seen as him making utter fool out of her from Kim Yu-Rin's perspective.

"Later. There is more important work we need to finish first." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin called up the excuse of 'later', in order to overcome this critical moment. Obviously, they did have a mission to complete here; he grasped the silver knife tightly and started walking towards the Vampire Lord.

“No.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

But Kim Yu-Rin proved to be a stubborn customer.

“The story will take too long to finish. We have something to...” (Sae-Jin)

“All I want is one simple answer. It’s not going to take long.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Her firmly shut lips and her sharply narrowed eyes – with an expression as grave and serious, something Sae-Jin had never seen her make before, she continued with her words.

“You, you are the Hero Orc, yes? Your Trait, you can transform into other Forms besides the Leviathan, yes?”

Chapter 156

The Entry (4)

Stuck between Kim Yu-Rin busy demanding answers, and the Vampire Lord who was gazing on expectantly, Sae-Jin fell into a dilemma of sorts.

One second, then one minute, valuable time was being wasted away in anxiety.

During this time, the Vampire Lord was ‘kind’ enough not to attack first and he instead waited for them. It seemed that he didn’t think too highly of the current situation’s seriousness at all.

Sae-Jin closed his eyes and sighed out grandly. The nervous swallowing from Kim Yu-Rin sounded really loud at that moment.

“I am.....” (Sae-Jin)

...However, Sae-Jin didn’t continue.

Rather, the chilling sound effect of a blade piercing flesh cried out, instead.

The wide-eyed Kim Yu-Rin hurriedly turned her head towards the Lord. A silver knife was buried deeply in his solar plexus.

“*Kkeuh-euh...* You dirty scoundrel!” (The Vampire Lord)

The Lord spat out his rage and blood at the same time.

“I was aiming for the heart, though. You somehow dodged.” (Sae-Jin)

The knife’s flight time was probably less than 0.1 seconds, no more than a blink. But still, fitting for the one holding the title of the Vampire Lord, he twisted his body just in time to avoid getting struck in his heart.

And with this first strike done and dusted now, there was no more room left to hold a conversation. Kim Yu-Rin gritted her teeth and held her Gungnir tightly.

Sae-Jin spoke to her in the meantime.

"Don't forget our real purpose from here onwards, please. I'll tell you everything once this is over." (Sae-Jin)

"That promise, I'll hold you to it." (Kim Yu-Rin)

At the same time, the ground below changed. No, the space itself seemed to warp. The floor they stood on became dyed in blood-red colour, and the Lord, once close enough for them to touch by reaching out, was pulled back to a far off distance, glaring at their direction.

Almost right away, the reddened ground began to literally boil, and giant Monsters rose up one by one.

Even among those, there was one particular creature that caught their attention.

A giant snake-like existence seemingly painted in ash, that was both real and at the same time, not.

The Twilight Spirit.

A demonic creature commonly thought of as the apex of all Undead type Monsters.

That wasn't the only Monster to come out, though. A Two-Headed Ogre, a Crimson Wyvern, Death Knights, etc, etc... Fifteen Monsters that could individually bring an entire city to a standstill appeared and filled up the room.

"Well, this looks like it might get tricky for only the two of us." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin muttered out with a frustrated voice. Sae-Jin shook his head at her declaration, however.

"We just need to endure for a while. There's a parasitic Mana and a powerful poison applied to the blade of that knife. If the Lord is maintaining this space with his Mana, he's not going to last long." (Sae-Jin)

"...In that case, I should help out with the process, then." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin grasped her sword in reverse grip. She was planning to fire off a beam of

light in the blink of an eye to kill the Lord.

On the other hand, Sae-Jin transformed back into the Leviathan and summoned the Kraken to divert the danger away from her.

Just as the Kraken's suction pads stretched out on the ground, with a loud *Kwahahaha*, Kim Yu-Rin's beam of energy shot forward like a bolt of lightning. The Monsters summoned by the Lord got in the path of the beam to block it with their bodies, but the energy beam simply blasted past all flesh and bones to successfully blow away the Vampire Lord's arm.

Her Trait was set to 'pierce through everything', that was why.

"Kkeuahahck!!"

The Lord's pained scream was the signal; the fifteen summoned Monsters lunged forward. Sae-Jin exhausted over half of his Mana reserve and fired off the Mana cannon, and almost half of the Monsters were killed off on the spot. However, the super-annoying Twilight Spirit and the fleet-footed Death Knights were still fine. They bared fangs and swords instead, thick killing intent fully on display.

"I'll take on that snake-like creature!! The Death Knights are yours!" (Sae-Jin)

"Got it!!" (Kim Yu-Rin)

The Twilight Spirit was a Monster existing on the boundaries of ambiguity, and was both a physical being and not at the same time. In other words, it could freely alter its 'nature' and the characteristics of itself at will. So it could become immaterial to evade an attack, then become a physical being again to counter.

Such as now.

"Kkheup!"

The snake's tail materialised out of thin air and struck Sae-Jin's stomach.

As he was forced back by some considerable distance, he tried to come up with ways to kill that thing. From what he learned from the Monster bestiary, this Monster couldn't be killed with regular attacks. And the Mana cannon with its limited range wouldn't work on that nimble creature, either.

However, as the Lycanthrope, he could prise out a weakness in it. So, he had to aim for that...

He quickly changed into the Lycanthrope Form. At the same time, a big shadow loomed over his head. A Death Knight's massive sword came down to split his head in half, but Kim Yu-Rin's golden beam of energy deflected it away.

“A Werewolf?! That’s, crazy! So, the, plan?!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin asked him while deploying the acrobatic swordsmanship to ward off the Death Knights' attacks.

“Let’s kill other Monsters first! We can then go one on one with the Boss Monste... Euhurck!!” (Sae-Jin)

As he was in the middle of his answer, Sae-Jin got hit on the belly by that dang tail again.

KuongKwahng, KuongKwahng!!

Even while he was flung away, countless attacks rained down on him. He felt like his entire body was turning into a meat paste. He got hit, so that hurt like hell, and the pain caused him to get angry.

He activated the Eyes of the Wolf.

The body of the Twilight Spirit as seen through his Eye was as expected, jet-black, no weaknesses whatsoever. But when he focused his glare where the Monster's heart should be, a faint red spot gradually developed. And so, one single weakness had emerged.

Sae-Jin confidently pounced on the Monster.

“Time to die... Euh-huh-urk!!!” (Sae-Jin)

Too bad, he had forgotten that, although there was a weakness now, he still lacked strength to fight it one on one. Kim Sae-Jin was flung away to a far off distance with a single flick of the Monster's tail.

“Ah-euht!”

At the same time, Kim Yu-Rin's groan could be heard as well. Surprisingly enough, although she was still being buffed with support magic, she used her own strength to defeat three of the five Death Knights surrounding her.

But as a human, it was asking far too much of her martial prowess to contend with five near-Boss level Monsters like the Death Knights. The Kraken was helping out on the side, but ever since Sae-Jin stopped using the Leviathan Form, its might had decreased significantly...

In that moment, the Death Knight's massive sword drew towards the exhausted Kim Yu-Rin's direction.

Sae-Jin hurriedly ran over there and tried to block that swinging sword.

But, it was right then.

The space contracted suddenly, and all the summoned Monsters disappeared.

Just in the nick of time, the Vampire Lord's strength had been exhausted. Two people sighed out in relief and controlled their rough breathing.

However, the Twilight Spirit remained for some reason. The Monster maintained the physical form and as if to protect the Lord, stood in front of him.

"No matter what petty tricks you come up with, you'll still die, so why don't you quietly give up now?" (Sae-Jin)

"Heu... huhuh."

The Lord continued to laugh even after hearing Sae-Jin's taunts. The Twilight Spirit moved to the side of the Lord at the same time. Then, the Lord shoved his hand into the heart of the Monster; the heart was ripped out while spewing out blood everywhere like a fountain.

"What the...?!"

"This is an existence that shares my blood. I've made it by sacrificing my own soul."
(The Vampire Lord)

While muttering the words they couldn't quite comprehend, the Lord began biting into

the heart, consuming it bit by bit. It was indeed a grotesque sight to behold, but it wasn't all that difficult to figure out the meaning behind his actions – well, his complexion improved greatly, and his body size ballooned up to a huge size, after all.

"Keuhahaha!!!"

Continuously growing larger and larger until he was as big as an Ogre, the Lord viciously laughed out and pounced on Sae-Jin and Kim Yu-Rin's direction.

For a something that big, he moved seriously fast. The Lord arrived in the blink of an eye and his fist flew toward their way. The moment they blocked that hit, it felt like every single bone in their bodies were twisting apart and exploding out from their bodies – the Lord's strike was that terrifyingly powerful. Even though the two of them shared the burden, the pressure was so immense that their eyeballs were about to pop out from the sockets.

One seconds, two, then three... the incredible pressure gradually grew greater along with the Lord's ballooning muscles as the seconds ticked by.

If this continued, they would surely be squashed to death.

Sae-Jin glared at the Lord with his bloodshot eyes.

The darn b*stard was smiling.

That evil grin was so disgusting, Sae-Jin oh-so wanted to wipe it away really badly. He desperately rolled his brain that was on the brink of being squashed flat, until one possible method popped up in his head.

The Orc, and that 'most pure body' thingy.

That Skill allowed him to increase his physical strength by 1000%. If he added the Warrior of Reversal on top of that, then there should be nothing in this world that rivalled him for physical might.

Kim Yu-Rin was next to him but, since he had resigned himself to tell her the truth, it was now only the matter of time, instead...

His thoughts were quick, but his actions were even quicker. The thick fur covering his body disappeared, while his muscles quivered and quaked as his skin started to

change.

Changing into the Orc Form, Sae-Jin opened his eyes wide, and at the same time as activating the Warrior of Reversal, he explosively forced his strength well past his limit.

SFX for the Orc's roar

The violently surging strength he could not control exploded out of his mouth. This marvelous power, this sense of overbearing boost bursting out from his insides – with that, he shoved the Lord's fist away with only one hand.

“Euh-euck...”

Freed from the Lord's pressure, Kim Yu-Rin crumbled to the ground. And she dazedly turned her gaze sideways.

An Orc, instead of Kim Sae-Jin, was standing there.

“.....Hah. Seriously, I can't even...”

Utterly stunned, she broke out in a bitter chuckle.

The person she harboured warm emotions for the first time in her life turned out to be not an Orc at all. She didn't know whether to feel relieved, or be very p*ssed off at the man who had seemingly made fun of her until now.

But she couldn't think too deeply about this.

Her entire being felt fatigued. And an unavoidable sense of weakness washed over. She fainted in exhaustion where she sat.

“Oh, child. You have lost your humanity.” (The Vampire Lord)

The Lord dazedly murmured as he stared at Sae-Jin and his brightly burning body.

“Why don't you take a moment to compose yourself...” (The Vampire Lord)

“Stop barking like a dog!!” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin the Orc jumped up towards the midriff where the silver knife still remained stuck, and went to town there. The Vampire Lord spat out a mouthful of blood. Then, he muttered strange words.

“*Ogribahack Sobet.*”

“What was that?” (Sae-Jin)

“Huhuh...” (The Vampire Lord)

His grin was rather ominous. Soon after, the Lord’s body began to shrink back like a deflating balloon. He staggered around before falling on his back, then gazed at the darkened ceiling with sorrowful eyes.

“I can not see anything anymore.” (The Vampire Lord)

“Really.” (Sae-Jin)

“Ever since losing my sight... I didn’t expect my end to be like this... Oh child, come closer. Now that I’ve welcomed my fate, there is something I must tell you. Are you not curious, just what research I have been performing in here?” (The Vampire Lord)

The Lord gestured him to come closer. The Orc tilted his head and approached the dying Vampire.

And the Lord whispered several strange words to the Orc’s ear.

Sae-Jin the Orc’s brows narrowed. He just couldn’t really understand what he was saying, centred around the words ‘Monster’, ‘future’, and ‘past’.

Unfortunately, before explaining further, the Lord’s breathing came to a gradual stop.



And so, the Vampire Lord was dead. And just like the decrepit king he was, his end was wretched and hollow.

Meanwhile, Kim Yu-Rin woke up largely unscathed after drinking a potion.

The two of them – Sae-Jin and Kim Yu-Rin – set out to locate the rest of the team. But

they didn't talk. Trapped within this stubborn silence, they found the missing team members one by one.

Yi Hye-Rin and Joo Ji-Hyuk were this close from being frozen to death; Hazeline and Yu Baek-Song must've had a huge catfight as their faces were crimson red, their breathing rough and heavy; while both the conditions of Rhosrahdel and Kim Sun-Ho were quite critical. Having lost an arm each, if they were found even a minute later, they might have died.

In any case, everyone was alive, much to their relief.

Sae-Jin used the sorcery to teleport everyone back to the underground conference room.

While Yi Hye-Rin and Joo Ji-Hyuk warmed their bodies up, Sae-Jin begun his treatment on Rhosrahdel and Kim Sun-Ho – but, during that time, Yu Baek-Song and Hazeline broke out in yet another fight. And no, it wasn't some cute war of words either – it was more apt to describe it as fierce brawl, instead.

“Please, calm down, calm down I say!! Just what happened back there?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Will you two just stop already?! Stop!!” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

Yi Hye-Rin grabbed Hazeline's arms, while Joo Ji-Hyuk held Yu Baek-Song back.

“But, she keeps teasing me and calls me a little kitty!!” (Yu Baek-Song)

“Hah, just when did I do that?! You started first by saying that I like Sae...” (Hazeline)

Yu Baek-Song's angry shout resounded to everywhere, but too bad, Hazeline's retort couldn't continue and had to come to a complete stop. Hazeline could only shrink away while checking out Sae-Jin's reactions.

It was then.

Kim Yu-Rin remained deep in thought, before she suddenly stood up from the couch.

“I'm going ahead first.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

She spoke while staring at Sae-Jin pointedly.

"Ah, sure. T, take care." (Sae-Jin)

"You're not coming?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"...Eh?" (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin panicked at that moment. But, with a great timing, Jo Hahn-Sung's phone call arrived at the same time.

"Please wait for a sec. Let me get this first... Hello? What's the matter?" (Sae-Jin)

– *"Hello, Guild Master. Sir, we've got too many artifact orders piled up as we speak. So, I have set down dates for interviews, but..."*

The contents were about the artifacts. The Monster lowered the pricing of the artifacts after taking into consideration the current climate of the world, and well, the number of orders coming from around the globe literally exploded. So, perhaps inevitably, they had to hold face to face interviews, in order to pick the right sort of people to own these artifacts.

"Oh, that. I'll take care of that later on, so don't worry. For now, give priority to the compiled list and sell accordingly, please." (Sae-Jin)

– *"Yes, sir. I understand."*

Sae-Jin quickly ended the call. But Kim Yu-Rin had long disappeared to elsewhere.

"...Huh."

"She went upstairs. Follow her. Dunno what's going on, but still." (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin answered for him. So, he hurriedly chased after Kim Yu-Rin.

Chapter 157

Tension (1)

Wrapped up inside the thick darkness of the night, underneath the cold glare of the moon.

Kim Yu-Rin was sitting on one of The Monster Park's benches. Her eyes were closed, as if she was in a state of deep contemplation.

Sae-Jin breathed in deeply and walked towards her position.

“I’m disappointed.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Before he could get near her, though, she threw out this one line at him. He scratched the back of his neck while lowering his head.

“...I mean, seriously. Yes, it was somewhat odd, for sure – how can an Orc resemble a human so closely like that... Ah, now that I think about it, I do remember seeing several points that are really similar to Mister Sae-Jin’s countenance, after all.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Her reactions were completely out of Sae-Jin’s expectations. Although not at the level of wanting to mow down everything, he at least thought she might get angry at him.

But no, what she displayed wasn’t the rage at being deceived, nor sadness at finding out the Hero Orc wasn’t real, but self-mockery that blamed herself instead. And that only made Sae-Jin feel even worse than before and far more apologetic as well.

Sae-Jin sat on the opposite end of the bench Kim Yu-Rin sat on. She gazed at the moon drawn on the night sky and continued with her words.

“No, from the beginning, an Orc with IQ known to be lower than that of a dolphin learning to speak was a nonsensical notion. I should’ve realised that something was amiss then... It’s all because of that Goblin...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

After hearing her sudden change in the topic, Sae-Jin’s body shook imperceptibly.

'That Goblin'. Without a doubt, she must be talking about the tale from a long time ago...

"Ah, right. Guild Master, did you know that Goblins can learn to speak, too?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"G, Goblins, you say?" (Sae-Jin)

"Yes. Well, Goblins are the smartest among all the Monsters, after all. So, among the smart Goblins, the one with the most smartest brain can learn how to speak Korean. But that was my mistake, thinking that a mutated Orc could definitely learn to talk, too. So, I'm definitely not a fool in that regard, right? Even other people with similar experiences would have been deceived." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Sae-Jin's complexion froze up along with her words. His gestures became eye-catchingly strange, and his breathing became quite rough as well.

"Why are you reacting like that? It's the truth. I've experienced it firsthand." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"....."

Sae-Jin didn't reply. He was already feeling so, so apologetic right now, and well, he realised that he just couldn't speak another lie to her again.

But, she ended up misinterpreting his current reaction and showed her frustration with a deep frown.

"You don't believe me... Hah, fine. Forget about it. It'll be more strange to believe me anyway." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"No, I do believe you." (Sae-Jin)

He resolutely replied to her and stared at Kim Yu-Rin with his eyes wide open. Seeing his sudden 'enthusiasm', Kim Yu-Rin's face reddened ever so slightly.

"Oh, uh, thank you for believing me..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"The thing is, that Goblin, that was also me." (Sae-Jin)

“..... Eh?”

This time, it was Kim Yu-Rin who ceased all her movements – her mouth half-open, and her eyes opened up extra round.

Thinking that she might not believe him, Sae-Jin hammered the final nail in this particular coffin.

“Your gift, I received it well. It’s an expensive ring, too.” (Sae-Jin)

“Uh.....”

She fell into a pool of thought for a brief moment; a ring as a gift. A ring given away as a gift was a fact that only she and the Goblin knew. No one else.

“Mm. So that’s how it was.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Plop.

She dazedly muttered out something, and then collapsed.

The physical strain of fighting against the Vampire Lord, as well as two mental shocks, caused her to faint.

“What the?! Miss Yu-Rin? Why?!” (Sae-Jin)

Stunned silly by this new development, Sae-Jin quickly used healing magic on her. But when she still didn’t regain her consciousness, he quickly carried her off to the nearest hospital.



After admitting Kim Yu-Rin to the hospital, Sae-Jin went around sorting out the strained relationships of the Guild members that soured for one reason or the other. And finally, came back home.

The time was 5 o’clock in the afternoon.

Since Yu Sae-Jung was busy with the matters related to the Wizard Tower and frequently had to be away, the house was left totally empty for the first time in a long

while.

“Uh-whew...”

He dug into the couch while spitting out a long sigh thick with all the accumulated fatigue. Somehow, he felt empty and hollow. The mission was over, and the sense of extreme enervation gripped his entire body. Thinking that he must have been feeling lonely, Sae-Jin turned on the TV. With a good timing, Yu Sae-Jung’s face filled up the screen.

- *When are you planning for the IPO of the Dawn & TM's Wizard Tower?*
- *Listing stocks for the Tower? Is there a need for me to do that? After all, our Wizard Tower can fully sustain itself without resorting to such methods, you see.*

It was an interview on a news programme. Yu Sae-Jung came across as very confident in her speech.

Seeing her on the screen, he ended up wanting to see her for real. So, he called her on the phone. *Wuoong, wuoong~* After the ringtone went on for three, four times, the call got through.

“Hey, Sae-Jung. Where are you now?” (Sae-Jin)

- *Mm~uong. Me, I'm eating out with people who will work for the Wizard Tower, yup.*

Her voice was a bit slurred. Did she drink alcohol? Sae-Jin’s brows narrowed all of a sudden.

“Where?” (Sae-Jin)

- *Ah, here? A sushi restaurant.*

As she spoke on the phone, another voice belonging to a man repeatedly saying “*Who are you speaking to?*” interfered in the background. Unconsciously, Sae-Jin cracked his neck. The sounds of *Wou-de-deuk. Wou-de-deuk* rang out rather clearly.

“Which sushi restaurant?” (Sae-Jin)

- *Ah-heung~? Oh, why did you call me, Oppa?*

“...I was wondering where you went off to. Hey, so where are you right now?”

– “Ah, here? Uh... not so sure?”

“You wanna get killed?!”

– “Ah~eeeng. Forgive me. It’s a meeting for the Tower, so if Oppa shows up, I’m gonna get shoved aside, you know~.”

Of course, he could understand that much. But right now, that clueless dude next to her asking “Who is that? Who’s calling?” was seriously getting on his nerves.

“Okay, fine. Then switch the phone to the speaker. I want to say something.” (Sae-Jin)

– “..... Uh? Uh... Oh... Is there really a need for that now~? I’ll speak on your behalf~!”

“I promise, it’ll be real quick. I’m not coming home for a whole week if you don’t.” (Sae-Jin)

– “Eii... okay, okay. Fine... It’s done, you’re on speaker.”

Sae-Jin manipulated his vocal cord and changed his voice a little bit. And then, towards all those people relaxedly dining out and building a strong friendship, he threw out the proverbial bombshell.

“Euh-eum. Hello, everyone, this is the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong speaking. Currently, I’m with Mister Kim Sae-Jin. I’m making this call after having a good chat with him. You see, I’m planning to publish the grimoires number 27 and 28 very soon. And so, I seek two capable persons who will examine and verify the contents of the books. Is there anyone among you who is interested in the role?” (Sae-Jin the Wizard)

He spoke up to here and waited for three seconds.

By examining the grimoires, one could have his or her name associated with the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong’s grimoire for free. That alone would increase their fame far greatly than ever thought possible. And sure enough, the animalistic heavy breathing of every Wizard wishing to seize this enormous opportunity could be heard through the phone.

Sae-Jin did his very best to hold back his laughter and spoke in a serious tone.

"If no one is interested, then it can't be helped, I guess." (Sae-Jin)

Instantly, Wizards reacted.

At first, in order to prove each one of them possessed the right qualifications over the person next to him or her, they began 'quietly' debating their academic abilities.

- *"Seeing that the Wizard-nim of Bangbae-Dong has been continuously publishing attack magic spells lately, I, who has steadfastly walked the road of attack magic until now should be the one to examine the new grimoires."*
- *"No, that's not right. Attacking spells needs to be combined with other types of spells. From that point of view, I should take on the responsibility, as I've arduously walked on the path of application and utilisation of various magics..."*
- *"Both of you are wrong. From the onset, something this important should be seen by someone with a deep academic background, instead."*
- *"Huh, what do you mean by a deep academic background? Are you using that inconsequential reasoning for such an important matter?"*

However, the tone of the voice got heated as rebuttal after rebuttal were thrown around. And soon enough, not only angry shouts but even the sounds of plates, tables, and other furniture being destroyed could be heard from the phone.

"Huhuh. They're fighting so nicely." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin was enjoying the sound of the chaos, but then, the noise got abruptly cut off. It seemed that Yu Sae-Jung had left the restaurant in a hurry.

- *"Those people lost their dang marbles!! Just now, they were even getting ready to use magic, you know!"*

"Hehehe. In that case, why don't you bring along the winner over here?" (Sae-Jin)

- *"...You're a rotten person, you know that? Seriously now."*

Although her dinner out was totally ruined, she sounded rather pleased for some reason.

- "By the way, publishing two grimoires at the same time, is that true? If you're lying, I'm going to get mad!"

And that was why. Sae-Jin smirked slightly.

"Of course, I will. Okay, where are you? I'll pick you up." (Sae-Jin)

- "Oh yeah~. I'm at the Tebudong Sashimi~. Hurry up, Oppa~."

"On the way." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin ended the call and put on the coat. But, as he was about to leave, he overheard the news still left playing on the TV screen.

- *A news just in. It has been now confirmed that a super-massive Fissure has opened up in the region of Western Europe. This Fissure is the biggest ever recorded in the history to appear in Europe...*

".....What's going on?" (Sae-Jin)

This was different from the promise with *her*. So, Sae-Jin tried to contact Bathory through the communication crystal hidden in his pocket, but she didn't reply. Was she going back on her promise?

Just as the back of his head began developing a strong case of migraine, Bathory's voice got transmitted to him, which was fortunate.

'Come see me tomorrow. Busy today.'



Immediately on the following day, Sae-Jin went to see Bathory.

"I'm sure you've found out already whether we succeeded or not." (Sae-Jin)

"Yep. I know already. El Las and their loyal dogs were throwing a huge tantrum not too long ago." (Bathory)

Bathory was pretending to be relaxed, but the emotions of sadness couldn't be disguised in her voice. Plus, her eyes staring at Sae-Jin weren't even *looking* at him,

either – memories of distant past were sorrowfully overflowing from within those eyes that rippled like the surface of a lake.

“Who’s el Las now?” (Sae-Jin)

When Sae-Jin asked her, Bathory tilted her head in confusion. It looked as if she had misplaced a couple of screws in her head.

“Oh, el Las? They are a clan. The Bathory, the Nosferatu, the el Las – only these three remain now.” (Bathory)

She forced out a smile and continued on.

“And, your prediction was right. What the Lord wanted wasn’t going back in time, just a simple travel through to another dimension. Apparently, after deciphering the text from the ancient tome, jumping both the time flow and dimensions at the same time is impossible.” (Bathory)

“Is that so?” (Sae-Jin)

“Because of that, both the el Las and the Lord’s retainers are in a state of rage right now. I think the Lord was thinking of running away alone.” (Bathory)

“.....”

“On top of that, the treasure that controlled the Vampire’s instincts for blood has been lost a long time ago after the Lord lost his sight. How... pathetic.” (Bathory)

Bathory stopped talking here. Sae-Jin too, didn’t say anything.

However, when he came to see her, he had lots of things to say. The incident involving the Fissure in Western Europe; the future for the Vampires that have lost the central figure of the Lord; Bathory’s aim; and even, persuading her to assimilate back into the society.

Sae-Jin couldn’t utter any of these out.

The reason? Tear drops forming on the corners of Bathory’s eyes. Sure, Sae-Jin couldn’t get her fickle nature that took her from asking him to kill the Lord, and to mourn his passing, but whatever, the sorrow she displayed right now was, without a

doubt, genuine.

“What a coward. Good thing he died.” (Bathory)

Bathory spoke thus, her voice tinged in deep sadness.

However, he couldn’t return empty-handed after going through the big showdown of the day before.

So, Sae-Jin cautiously asked her about the giant Fissure of Western Europe first.

“We have nothing to do with that one.” (Bathory)

“...What? Really?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yeah. We didn’t touch other Fissures except the one here in Korea.” (Bathory)

“Does that mean there’s another force at work here?” (Sae-Jin)

“Nope. That’s just nature playing its part. From the moment the first Fissure opened up, the future path for this little planet called Earth became full of thorns, so to speak.” (Bathory)

“What do you mean by that?” (Sae-Jin)

“What I mean is that, this planet Earth will meet the same fate as my old homeworld, that’s what. The Lord was trying to escape before that happened, too. But I don’t know all the details. I also just heard about it not too long ago, you know.” (Bathory)

“From who?” (Sae-Jin)

“From my subordinates. They are busy trying to decipher the results of the research the Lord has performed, right now. I’m getting updated in real time as we speak.” (Bathory)

Bathory then abruptly stood from her seat.

“Okay, you should go now. As promised, we won’t interfere with you lot or try to extend the Fissure forcefully or stuff like that. With that much, you should have about a year’s worth of breathing room.” (Bathory)

“...Just one year?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yup. So, you should decide and prepare whether you’ll act like us and escape to another world, or stay and fight till the bitter end.” (Bathory)

“What will you do?” (Sae-Jin)

Bathory narrowed her brows as if she was getting frustrated with a little kid.

“.....Our object has always been the same – to return to our old home world, see. So, get the eff out, now.” (Bathory)

She suddenly grabbed Sae-Jin’s collars real tightly. And then, an unpleasant sensation of the entire world twisting apart washed over, causing him to squeeze his eyes shut. When he belatedly opened his eyes again, Bathory was nowhere to be seen, and instead, the sight of Seoul’s Gangnam district filled up his vision.

“Why Gangnam, of all places?!” (Sae-Jin)

As he looked around dumbfoundedly, whisperings of the passersby tickled his ears.

“What the? Isn’t he that Kim Sae-Jin guy?”

“You might be right. Hey man, go and take a closer look.”

It hadn’t even been a minute yet, but the waves of crowd were gradually building up.

Sae-Jin let out a ‘groan’ of exclamation, thinking that celebrities could indeed upset the heavens if needed, and quickly moved his feet. Too bad, his actions only ended up confirming the crowd’s suspicions.

“It is Kim Sae-Jin!!”

“Oppa, please gimme your autograph!!”

“Oppaaaaaaa-ack~!!!”

Getting scared by that loud cry, Sae-Jin ran away like his rear was on fire.

Chapter 158

Tension (2)

All the core posts for the Dawn & TM's Wizard Tower had now been mostly filled up – the Vice Tower Lord and seven Chief Wizards that were similar to executive directors in a regular corporation, plus the employee-level high-class, mid-class, and low-class positions, as well.

The name of the Vice Lord caused a massive stir, however. The Wizard appointed to this prestigious position was none other than the High Elf 'Shahon', former Vice Lord of the New York-based world no. 2 Wizard Tower, 'Trinity'.

After the announcement for her appointment was made, Shahon expressed her sincere gratitude towards the Dawn & TM's Tower through various interviews she did with the mass media. Hell, she even did that in fluent Korean. No one had any idea when she learned the language, either.

Not only that, the identities of the people filling up the Chief Wizard positions were quite something to behold as well – former Vice Lord for the Seoul Tower, former Lord of Busan Tower, etc, etc... They consisted of famous local and international Wizards.

However, the most important position remained vacant while other spots were steadily being filled up. Not one person expressed their curiosity regarding that, though. After all, everyone understood that this position could only go to the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong and no one else.

Even someone like Hazeline, who had once been a part of the Wizarding world but left it due to a certain unsavoury incident, thought the same as well – but, only until the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong himself, Kim Sae-Jin, personally called for her.

“.....Excuse me?” (Hazeline)

Currently, inside Sae-Jin's office. Hazeline asked him in a daze while sitting opposite him. Within her extra-round eyes, questions and disbelief floated about.

“So, what do you think? I personally think you're the perfect fit.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin smiled as he spoke.

The reason why he summoned her here was simple. It was to appoint her the new Tower Lord.

The media might throw a hissy fit and say what on earth he was thinking, but this wasn't a completely left-field hiring at all – because, although she was currently the well-known Alchemist Miss Hazeline, her actual origin lied with magic. She simply stepped away on her own volition after failing to control her emotions properly.

But Sae-Jin believed she still possessed a massive attachment to the world of magic, even now.

If not, then there wouldn't be a reason for her to look up the Wizards' online chat rooms and communities periodically, no reason to jump around in joy like a little kid after successfully learning a new spell, and of course, no point in her coming up with the fake identity of "Shenarine" and secretly acting as a Wizard, either.

"....."

Hazeline maintained her silence – probably because of Kim Yu-Rin. Unless Hazeline resolved her long-standing *conflict* and the guilt associated with it, she would never be able to find the necessary courage to return to the world of magic, perhaps for the rest of her life.

"The thing is..." (Hazeline)

Hazeline fixed her stare to the floor and opened her mouth while fidgeting uncomfortably. Her voice was so weak and quiet.

"Mister Sae-Jin, thank you for your consideration. But, my abilities aren't..." (Hazeline)

"I'm sure they are better than Miss Shahon's. You perfectly studied all of the Bangbae-Dong Wizard's grimoires, after all." (Sae-Jin)

Hazeline had been virtually camping out in the Guild's members-only library of late – obviously, in order to thoroughly study the grimoires of Bangbae-Dong Wizard.

Currently, she had flawlessly memorised the books number 1 to 26, and had reached the stage where she could potentially invent her own unique attack spell as well.

So, her qualifications were more than good enough.

But, she still lacked confidence. No, it was more like, she lacked courage.

"That's only because of the Mana Tattoos, you know. What I lack in technique, I cover it with increased Mana reserve, that's all. And also, I..." (Hazeline)

It seemed that she had more things to say, but other than her lips moving a bit, no words came out of them.

Sae-Jin didn't know the exact words she wanted to say, but he could still roughly estimate what she wanted to say, regardless.

"Miss Kim Yu-Rin also gave her consent." (Sae-Jin)

".....Eh?"

Those words seemed unrealistic, rather than 'shocking', to her. Because, there was no way Kim Yu-Rin would forgive her.

While studying her face frozen in stunned silence, Sae-Jin recalled the events from the day before.



"If you're asking me for my professional opinion, then I'm against it. No. Totally against it! Tooootally, completely, against it." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Her answer was very resolute for a patient still lying on a hospital bed. And there was even a hint of hostility in Kim Yu-Rin's expressions.

"But, why?" (Sae-Jin)

"She's definitely not normal in her head. I mean, where in the world can you find a crazy woman like her who poisons a person's potion? There's no guarantee that she won't do that ever again." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"But you also don't have the guarantee that she will do it again, either." (Sae-Jin)

".....In any case, I'm still totally against it. It's too risky." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin pouted heavily.

At the ends of her hospital bed, stuffed dolls of the Orc and Athany stood side by side. Sae-Jin reached out and took the Orc doll. A sense of unease entered Kim Yu-Rin's eyes, hoping that he wouldn't take the doll away.

"Just what happened between you two?" (Sae-Jin)

He gently patted the top of the Orc doll and placed it on top of the bureau next to her bed.

".....It's complicated. By a lot." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin reached out and rescued the doll from the cold, hard wooden surface. And then, hid it securely under the covers.

"Well, it's not my place to pry into your past... However, Miss Hazeline is just about perfect for the position of the Tower Lord. At a bare minimum, I'd like a Wizard who is close to me filling up that position." (Sae-Jin)

"Surely, there must be lots of other, more suitable Wizards you can find, right? No, besides that, why are you asking me about this? I'm not related to this matter at all. If the Guild Master wishes for it, then you can just hire that crazy bitc... that person, am I wrong?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

She remained resolute. As befitting a 30-year old boyfriend-less lifelong loner, she was like an iron wall.

"That's because, without your consent, I'm pretty certain that Miss Hazeline wouldn't want to do it, either." (Sae-Jin)

".....No way that's true." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"Yes, way."

Kim Yu-Rin looked like she didn't believe him. She even went as far as to change the topic of the conversation when Sae-Jin tried to continue his persuasion.

"Let's talk about that later. More importantly, there's something I'm curious about, Guild Master." (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...Okay, what is it?” (Sae-Jin)

“I saw at the end there. What did the Lord say to you?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

The whispered words of the dying Vampire Lord – Sae-Jin couldn’t understand them back then, and he still couldn’t understand even now. But he remembered them all too clearly.

“It was like he was making a prophecy of some kind, but I have no idea what he was trying to say. On top of that, some of the words must have been in the Vampire language, because I couldn’t even hear those parts at all.”

When the Leviathan Form evolved he became able to decipher a handful of the native Vampire language, but truly, they were just a meagre handful. And all of them happened to be swearing, too.

But, Kim Yu-Rin didn’t lose her interest in this matter.

“What did he ended up saying?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“.....Hmm. ‘I stole a peek through a certain treasure of the Nosferatus. The worst monster in the history will become the hero’. It was something like that.” (Sae-Jin)

“Hmm.....”

As if she was thinking deeply, Kim Yu-Rin’s forehead creased up.

“Hmm... Mmm...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Fuhut.”

Kim Sae-Jin burst out laughing after quietly gazing at her trying to look serious and stuff. And then, pulled out the present he brought along. It was a stuffed doll that depicted a cute Goblin.

The common saying of ‘how cute can a Goblin be’ couldn’t be applied to this doll. A roundish, chubby head and short limbs – this cuteness was on the level that even Sae-Jin felt boastful about. And the evidence of its cuteness was Kim Yu-Rin’s face that was slowly melting into a puddle.

But she quickly hardened her face and spoke up.

"A Goblin, is it... Thank you for that time. I was able to survive, thanks to you." (Kim Yu-Rin)

She then extended her hand out matter-of-factly. Her face was full of covetousness, telling him to hand over the doll already. Too bad, Sae-Jin had no plans to do that, at least not so soon.

"Hahaha... thank you for the kind words. But, are you really refusing so quickly to help me on the matter I'm asking you about?" (Sae-Jin)

Kim Yu-Rin's smooth eyebrows twitched after she heard his words. Sae-Jin was aiming for this moment.

"...Why don't you guys meet up and talk first? Miss Hazeline is also regretting her actions as well. Plus, you receive this doll as a bonus on top." (Sae-Jin)

He playfully shook the doll's butt and seduced her.



While looking at Hazeline's stunned face, Sae-Jin clapped his hands loudly. Then, the door to his office was yanked open, and the heavy footsteps reverberated against the walls.

Hazeline froze up like the 'mangbuseok'. She didn't dare to turn her head around to look, only her eyeballs desperately shifted around. (*TL: the legend of 'mangbuseok' comes from the Korean history/folklore. Basically, a government official is sent to Japan back in 5th century AD for some sort of a rescue mission, his wife cries her eyes out by the shore, and allegedly turns into a stone statue, or something like that. Can't find a link in English that describes the lore, so well, take my word for it. Not sure why the author chose to use this reference, though.*)

The unknown person arrived right behind Hazeline and threw out this one line.

"Hey, you. Look at me." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Hazeline's shoulders jumped up. Looking as if she might fall off her chair at any moment, she stiffly turned around to look. And as expected, Kim Yu-Rin was standing

there. The only difference was, she didn't carry the same-old expression of anger.

“...Let's talk for a bit.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Her voice sounded rather bitter for some reason.

“Uh, uh... S, sure thing.” (Hazeline)

Hazeline dazedly replied. Kim Yu-Rin then turned to leave, before speaking up once more.

“Just the two of us. Will that be fine, Guild Master?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Of course.” (Sae-Jin)

Kim Yu-Rin left the office first, and with a totally terrified face, Hazeline followed right after.

Sae-Jin had no idea what the two of them talked about.

But, he could guess that the matter between them was heading towards the right direction, after he heard the noises of Hazeline's loud sobbing as well as the much softer sounds of Kim Yu-Rin lightly patting the crying Elf's back.



August, a month of scorching heatwaves assaulting the public.

This should have been the season when all the vacationing spots would be jam packed with holiday makers, but the current status of the world wasn't nice enough for something so relaxed like that.

Boss Monsters were popping up everywhere all the time; a huge Fissure opened up in Western Europe; and to top them off, predictions of the so-called experts that said, what the world was experiencing was not a one-off thing at all.

And because of all this unprecedeted chaos, even the heatwave ended up feeling quite bone-chilling to everyone alive.

But, The Monster's status was shooting up like crazy, totally opposite to the direction

of ruination the world was busy walking towards.

Showing a gradual rise from the initial Boss Monster incidents, then with the huge Fissure in Europe opening up, *boom!!* The Monster's sister company, TM's stock prices surged up through the roof, until shooting past the atmosphere, entering the stratosphere and beyond.

With this, Sae-Jin came to a realisation how the USA was able to become the most dominant, wealthiest nation on earth through the First World War.

The number of Griffins living in the nesting area managed by The Monster now totalled almost 600. Many countries in Europe begged to rent out this amazing method of transportation that allowed one to travel from the city of Sinuiju to Busan in less than three minutes, while requiring no prior preparation whatsoever. The amount they proposed for one Griffin was ten million Euros, and the duration being only a month. (*TL: Sinuiju is a city in North Korea that borders Chinese city, Dandong. Basically, it's on the other side of the Korean peninsula from the city of Busan.*)

Plus, the demand for The Monster's Mercenaries had increased by a great deal as well. There were 2300 Mercenaries working for The Monster, and only around 50 of them were currently not out on a mission – because, they were injured at the moment.

Also, The Monster established a 'control tower' of sorts, which would play the central role in making the important decisions in this fast-changing world. Well, it wasn't exactly 'establishing', but more like moving all the personnel that acted as the brains of the organisation into one spot.

And that spot just so happened to be the underground conference room hidden below The Monster Guild's HQ building, where the weekly meetings between the Guild members took place.

"Right now, around 100 Knights each from the countries England, Germany, and France are requesting for the licence to ride Griffins. And the orders for the various artifacts and the Orc's weapons are backed up to the point where we are running out of the numbered waiting tickets." (Jo Hahn-Sung)

Jo Hahn-Sung spoke while browsing through the documents.

Sae-Jin could only spit out long sighs, though.

The time he needed for making an artifact or a weapon depended solely on the grade of the finished item. Although the Proficiency Levels for several Skills, such as dexterity, had increased by a lot, he still required a minimum of two hours to craft a single item that could be rated ‘the best’ or the so-called ‘Named Goods’.

And to compound the difficulty, he even seemed to have developed the mentality of a true artisan – he didn’t want to sell those artifacts he wasn’t satisfied with, so out of ten he made, Sae-Jin ended up throwing away three just because he was unhappy with them.

He tried not to do this, but it was now ingrained in his instincts. He’d go crazy and destroy the offending articles, before regaining his senses and regret his actions a bit later. This repeated over and over again.

“...Many things have been delayed like this, sir.” (Jo Hahn-Sung)

Jo Hahn-Sung studied Sae-Jin’s mood before saying some words that indirectly conveyed his message. He was urging Sae-Jin for answers.

“Do one of those interviews or whatever and remove some of them off the list, please. The best I can do is three items a day.” (Sae-Jin)

“But if that happens, we might end up starting a bloody competition between the aforementioned European nations. The current crisis of the planet can only be overcome if all the earthlings band together...” (Jo Hahn-Sung)

“What was that? Did you just say something?” (Sae-Jin)

“.....No, sir.” (Jo Hahn-Sung)

“...I’ll do what I can, so for now, let me off the hook with this much.” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes, sir.”

And with that, the matters related to weapons and artifacts came to an end. Too bad for him, that wasn’t the only topic to discuss, however.

“Next. France’s president, as well as prime ministers of Spain and England requested for a face-to-face meeting with you, sir. They wish to discuss the topics regarding the Mercenaries as well as various others. Each of them are asking you to meet them first,

and to the Korean government..." (Jo Hahn-Sung)

"Wow. Our Guild Master is so busy~. It's really, really cool, you know~."

Yi Hye-Rin let off a soft exclamation of admiration as she continued to interestedly observe the proceedings from the side. However... Kim Yu-Rin smacked the back of her head, then.

"Ouch!! That hurts, you know!!" (Yi Hye-Rin)

"If you're aware of how busy he is, then stop distracting him." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"H, hmm..." (Hazeline)

Meanwhile, Hazeline cautiously slid in between the bickering duo while carrying a slightly weird expression – or, more correctly, with an envious face.

"...Y, Yu-Rin-ah, are you enjoying your lunch?" (Hazeline)

"...Yeah, it's nice." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"Really? I, I'm feeling full right now, so... would you like my portion of meat as well?" (Hazeline)

Hazeline asked with a red face while busy fidgeting around with her fingers. Kim Yu-Rin's cheeks also reddened slightly, and with an unsure face, she too hesitated. But then, like a swift and crafty little cat, Yu Baek-Song sitting next to them quickly butted in.

"In that case, gimme." (Yu Baek-Song)

"A, aht!! Hey, put it down, you idiot!" (Hazeline)

"You said you're full, though." (Yu Baek-Song)

Nyam, nyam.

Before anything could be done, Yu Baek-Song swallowed the steak in one gulp. Rage filled Hazeline's reddened face this time as she stood up and pointed her angry finger at Yu Baek-Song.

“What the heck!! This crazy cat burglar...!!” (Hazeline)

“It's fine.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“.....Oh, really?” (Hazeline)

...But with a single hand gesture from Kim Yu-Rin, Hazeline promptly sat back down on her seat.

And Yi Hye-Rin on the side interestedly studied this clear display of power dynamics between these two people.

Chapter 159

Tension (3)

“Well then, I’ll be on my way, Guild Master.” (Jo Hahn-Sung)

The insufferable meeting with Jo Hahn-Sung that lasted for over two hours finally came to an end.

“Feels like I might really die at this rate...” (Sae-Jin)

After Jo Hahn-Sung had left the conference room, Sae-Jin lied down on the couch immediately.

His vision was blurring, and his head ached. When he looked around the conference room, he found that the Guild members hadn’t left for home just yet. Some of them even brought along their own duvets and blankets, suggesting that maybe they were planning to camp out here, of all places.

– After researchers uncovered the crucial fact that the martial arts from the Jin Mudo School is particularly effective when combating Monster threats, the school has experienced an unprecedented level of boom recently. The dojo master, Miss Yi Yu-Jin is...

At the same time, the news on the television was delivering a story regarding the Jin Mudo. When Sae-Jin turned his attention towards the TV, he saw Yi Yu-Jin and her considerably improved complexion, plus her toothy smile, dominating the screen.

[Jin Mudo School master/The Monster Guild member]

– We have over 2000 dojos operating across the globe at the moment, with nearly ten thousand disciples receiving instructions. (Yi Yu-Jin)

– It sure is a wonderful trend without a doubt. By the way, what do you, as the leader of this martial arts school, think is the true advantage of this form of martial arts? (Interviewer)

- To me, the advantage is that, during the fight against Monsters in a stand-off situation, you're not hindered by your weapons, instead relying solely on the most natural movements your body can make. Plus, let's take a look at gauntlets; they are much easier to manufacture compared to other armaments, so, although they might be rated as similar in overall quality, you can find more gauntlets in circulation and crucially, they are cheaper to buy as well. And so, I believe that these and other points have combined to give the spotlight to our school of martial arts when it comes to the matter of Monster subjugation.

“...They've grown by that much already?” (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin got thoroughly impressed by the contents of the interview. Of course, The Monster did shower the school with an unrestrained level of support, but still, to grow by that much during the short period of two years was...

“Did you know that they've gotten really famous lately? The main body of texts and all the movement diagrams are left completely intact, so it's really easy to train in the art, and plus, its effectiveness is quite high, apparently. It's one of those ridiculous low risk, high return scenario, you see? I mean, our Knights Order received four Jin Mudo disciples during this year's new recruitment process, out of ten people selected this year!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin replied to him while watching the TV.

“Oh, really?” (Sae-Jin)

“By the way, that dojo master girl is also one of the Guild members, right?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin asked while resting her chin on her hands. Joo Ji-Hyuk volunteered an answer this time.

“Yes, that's correct. I've met her a few times, and she seems to be a nice person.” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

“...And just why would you meet her in the first place?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Suddenly, Yi Hye-Rin glared at Joo Ji-Hyuk with eyes narrowed to a slit like a flatfish.

And as the flustered Joo Ji-Hyuk began to stammer out an excuse, the interview got abruptly cut off without a warning. Then, the anchor began reading a new information, saying it was the breaking news.

- Near the province of Gangwon, a Mah-in has made an appearance. This Mah-in is understood to be an Ogre in origin...

A footage of a giant male ‘man’ rampaging around with bloodshot eyes was transmitted next. Everyone in the conference room held their breaths and watched the TV.

Those referred to as ‘Mah-ins’ hadn’t appeared publicly in the past ten years or so. If one did, then it was terminated almost immediately. The modern world viewed Mah-ins as even worse enemies of mankind than Vampires, after all.

Well, Vampires had the excuse of their own survival when attacking humans, but Mah-ins didn’t, as they simply enjoyed causing destruction and committing murder.

However, such a Mah-in had shown up out of the blue. Publicly, too.

“...Should we go and help?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin asked as she lowered her duvet. But Sae-Jin shook his head.

“No need. It’s walking around that exposed, so most likely, it’s been subjugated already.” (Sae-Jin)

- It has been confirmed that this Mah-in was subjugated by the Griffin Rider, Kim In-Soo, a short while ago.

With a great timing, the anchor spoke up. As Sae-Jin shrugged his shoulders, Kim Yu-Rin pulled the duvet closer.

“Oh, right. That Kim In-Soo, doesn’t he have a bit of history with you, Guild Master?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin suddenly asked Sae-Jin as if the thought suddenly popped up in her head now.

“We did have a little run-in back then, sure. But, how did you find that out?” (Sae-Jin)

"Sae-Jung told me. She said that you and Kim In-Soo fought over her and stuff~?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

"Fut."

Fighting over her...

Sae-Jin simply smiled.

Although his first encounter with Kim In-Soo wasn't positive, Sae-Jin didn't harbour any ill feelings towards the guy at all.

Actually, Sae-Jin ran into Kim In-Soo again about three months ago. He remembered that, as the Lycanthrope, he broke Kim In-Soo's weapon back then, so he ended up gifting an Orc's weapon to the poor guy.

Kim In-Soo expressed how grateful he was, with teardrops forming on his eyes and everything, while repenting on how much of a schmuck he was in the past.

"What? Fighting over her? Isn't it more like Sae-Jung doing everything she can in order to keep Mister Sae-Jin by her side, instead? I mean, she should be relieved that no one has snatched him away yet..." (Hazeline)

"She was probably only joking, though." (Yi Hye-Rin)

"Even if it was a joke, Sae-Jung's getting a little too conceited lately." (Hazeline)

Hazeline pouted as if she was unhappy about something. Too bad, Kim Yu-Rin's ultra-sharp eyes quickly stabbed into her back.

"...No, wait – y, you know, looking at her objectively, she is really like that nowadays." (Hazeline)

"Well, that is true." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Looking at Kim Yu-Rin suddenly agreeing with Hazeline, Sae-Jin simply carried on smiling.

"But still, you should refrain from saying those things again." (Kim Yu-Rin)

“I understand...” (Hazeline)

Hazeline cutely replied back and leaned her head on Kim Yu-Rin’s shoulder. But, as if that was annoying, Kim Yu-Rin moved slightly to the side to avoid it.

Sae-Jin chuckled while looking at the two.



A week after that, the appointment of the Tower Lord was announced to the public.

As expected, big reverberation and controversy got kicked up at the same time. It was all par for the course, really – since, although Hazeline was an A class Wizard approved by the government, the fact remained that she didn’t work as one for over eight years.

It didn’t take long before her status as The Monster Guild’s member got revealed, though. That helped turn around the public’s sentiment towards her favour. Of course, that was only the public’s...

“Isn’t there more water?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...Please endure for a bit longer.” (Sae-Jin)

Currently, the top floor of the Dawn and TM’s Wizard Tower.

Sae-Jin was standing before Hazeline’s office. But he wasn’t alone. And the person accompanying him was Kim Yu-Rin.

It was her very first time visiting Hazeline’s workplace which was stressing her out a lot, causing her to ask constantly for a glass of water for quite some time now.

“I, I’m going to the bathroom for a moment, so please go ahead and wait for me inside.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Eh? No, hey, wait a sec...” (Sae-Jin)

Before Sae-Jin could say anything, she ran away like a fired arrow. He could only look on dumbfoundedly at her disappearing back, before knocking on the door to Hazeline’s office.

"Who is it..."

The initial reply was rather energyless and also sounded annoyed as well.

"It's Kim Sae-Jin. Miss Yu-Rin is accompanying me as well."

Almost immediately, there was a change in her reaction.

With a hurried shout of "Just wait for a moment!!", the sounds of something tumbling around could be heard beyond the door, and he even sensed faint traces of magic being used as well. It seemed that she was busy tidying up the messy interior with magic.

Sae-Jin relaxedly waited for her to finish.

And after five minutes passed by, an officious voice leaked out from beyond the door.

"Please, enter."

She sounded needlessly dignified. Sae-Jin smiled thinly and opened the door.

Hazeline was sitting with her legs crossed and her back leaning against the back of the chair. Was that how a Tower Lord should sit? Sae-Jin swallowed back down his rising laughter, and sat down on a chair located in front of Hazeline's desk. Meanwhile, she looked beyond Sae-Jin, searching for Kim Yu-Rin's shadow.

"She went off to a restroom. But, besides all that, how is the work treating you after ten days on the job?" (Sae-Jin)

"Yes? Ah..... It's fine, more or less." (Hazeline)

Her complexion wasn't so good, though. When Sae-Jin narrowed his brows questioningly, she quickly added a couple extra words as well.

"I can't seem to adjust properly, is all." (Hazeline)

"What do you mean, you can't adjust?" (Sae-Jin)

"To the Wizarding world, I mean. I'm returning to it after so long, so... It's hard accepting their way of doing things." (Hazeline)

“Hmm...”

Actually, he had some idea of what was going on, after hearing about it before coming here. Thanks to her unexpected and somewhat *explosive* appointment, factionalism had developed within the Tower already.

However, the situation was just too one-sided to call it ‘factionalism’. On one side, a faction formed around the High Elf Shahon, and on the opposite side, it was Hazeline all by herself. The rest were remaining neutral.

“And besides that, anything else bothering you?” (Sae-Jin)

“I’m okay with the rest.” (Hazeline)

Hazeline didn’t tell him. She was trying not to worry him.

But, if this situation persisted, it was only a matter of time before Hazeline got swallowed up. If that happened, it would get too troubling for Sae-Jin.

Thankfully, though, she still had one very important ally she could count on. And this one single ally was far more reliable than any other rotten a*swipes combined together.

“Well, in any case, I believe that Miss Hazeline will adopt to the situation accordingly.” (Sae-Jin)

“Of course. You don’t have to worry.” (Hazeline)

For a briefest moment, a hint of anguish brushed past her expressions, but that was all.

“Oh, that’s right.” (Sae-Jin)

He figured that he should stop beating around the bush, and nonchalantly pulled out two books.

“Here. I almost forgot about them.” (Sae-Jin)

They were the unpublished Bangbae-Dong grimoires number 27 and 28.

As soon as she confirmed them via the covers, panic spread on Hazeline's face.

"But, but why are you giving me these?" (Hazeline)

"I'm planning to publish them soon, so I need people to proofread them. I shall leave the role of finding the right Wizards for that to you, Miss Hazeline." (Sae-Jin)

This was the sign of Bangbae-Dong Wizard approving Hazeline, and was akin to handing over a powerful, decisive weapon over to her as well.

"Take care of the rest, please." (Sae-Jin)

"Yes, yes?! But, where are you going? Mister Sae-Jin, if you just give me these two out of the blue and escape from here, you're putting me in a difficult position, you know?!" (Hazeline)

"I'm telling you to use them at your discretion. Besides, Miss Yu-Rin should be arriving soon, so why don't you discuss it between you two?" (Sae-Jin)

And with a great timing, Kim Yu-Rin pushed open the door and entered. Sae-Jin left the office as if he was passing the baton over to her.

Kim Yu-Rin called out to him flustered, asking where he was going, but he still resolutely escaped from the office.



Ten days later.

Sae-Jin heard that Hazeline managed to successfully conquer the Wizard Tower quite thoroughly by utilising the grimoires' powers.

But there was no time for him to feel chuffed about that.

Because, he received an urgent text message from Kim Sun-Ho.

And the message said that Kim Yu-Sohn was on the brink.

Sae-Jin dropped everything and hurriedly ran over to the hospital.

“Guild Master.”

“You’ve arrived...?”

There were other Guild members beside Kim Sun-Ho present in the hospital room.

Sae-Jin had come for a visit less than two weeks ago, yet Kim Yu-Sohn’s complexion was incomparably worse compared to before. Sae-Jin could acutely understand the meaning behind the description “nothing but skin and bones”.

Sae-Jin sat down on a chair next to Kim Yu-Sohn’s hospital bed.

Almost at the same time, the dying man slowly opened his eyes.

And as if he was waiting for this moment, a thin smile spread on his mouth as he stared at Sae-Jin.

Sae-Jin carefully held his skinny, bony hand.

His chest tightened. He felt numb.

Kim Yu-Sohn.

The first person Sae-Jin had ever confided his secrets to, and the person he relied on the most. Looking at him, Sae-Jin once or twice wondered it would have been nice if he had a father like Kim Yu-Sohn.

“...You’re truly one stubborn person.” (Sae-Jin)

Hearing Sae-Jin’s words that contained a myriad of meanings, Kim Yu-Sohn simply returned a smile. Then, he blinked slightly. Sae-Jin placed his ear closer to Kim Yu-Sohn’s mouth.

“...You’ve come.” (Kim Yu-Sohn)

“Of course.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin tried to smile. But he couldn’t do anything about his trembling voice and tears pooling on the edges of his eyes.

"I had a dream, one after such a long time." (Kim Yu-Sohn)

Sae-Jin's eyes widened instantly.

Kim Yu-Sohn didn't lose his smile while he continued on.

"However... it seems that... you don't have to worry." (Kim Yu-Sohn)

"...Why not?"

"In the near future, a hero will emerge and rescue this world." (Kim Yu-Sohn)

Kim Yu-Sohn tightly grasped Sae-Jin's hand.

"And that person... is 'probably'...you, Mister Sae-Jin. It was probably you. That is why... I decided not to worry anymore." (Kim Yu-Sohn)

Sae-Jin couldn't understand everything he was saying.

There were lots of things he wanted to ask, too.

To hear what he meant, and to see his healthy face and voice, that's what Sae-Jin wanted.

But, that wasn't possible anymore.

Kim Yu-Sohn simply left behind those enigmatic words, and before Sae-Jin had the chance to comprehend, closed his eyes forever.

"Well... then."

Those were the final words of Kim Yu-Sohn.

"Hah-ah..."

Sae-Jin's long, helpless sigh descended heavily in the room.

"D, dad!!"

Kim Sun-Ho ran up to the hospital bed.

And soon, the sobbing cries of a son who lost his father filled up the room.

Kim Sun-Ho's daughter, not yet a middle schooler, also began sobbing, seeing her father.

On that day, when the sounds of sadness echoed – outside the window, the refreshing yet hot rays of the Summer sun continued to blaze down.



Kim Yu-Sohn's funeral was a simple and small scale affair. Too bad, as if the news of Sae-Jin attending it got spread around, the number of people wanting to attend the occasion was incredible. Of course, Sae-Jin and Kim Sun-Ho refused them all.

Trying to soothe his sadness, Kim Sun Ho jokingly said that if he allowed all of them to attend, then he might have made over a million bucks from people donating money as a sign of their condolences.

But there was this one person they couldn't refuse.

And that was none other than "Emil Rerheu". (*TL: Well, the author suddenly switched the name from Emil Rerheu to Emilia. Thus, I will be switching to the latter version as well from here on.*)

If they refused, she'd murder them all publicly, after all.

"What brings you here?" (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin questioned her while wiping away tears around his eyes. Looking rather exhausted for some reason, Bathory didn't even bother with useless banter before diving into the main topic.

"Hey you, you know a guy called Jin Seh-Hahn?" (Bathory)

".....Sure."

Although he got scared there for a second or two, he replied while maintaining a poker face.

"Did you know that it was el Las Vampires that killed that dude? Anyways, those el Las

fools are colluding with the Mah-ins. Looks like there is some kind of secret that even I'm not aware of." (Bathory)

Sae-Jin's face hardened.

"Okay, so?"

"What do you mean by, 'okay, so'? I only came here to let you know, so you don't misunderstand about this whole thing, okay? I don't wanna be seen as someone who doesn't keep her promises or something." (Bathory)

Bathory spoke thus and coldly turned around to leave. However, Sae-Jin still had something left to say.

"Since you came all the way out here, let's work together." (Sae-Jin)

"....."

Her steps came to a dead stop. However, when she turned around, her cramped face was resembling a terrifying demoness.

"Let's help each other out." (Sae-Jin)

"...You, have you lost your marbles?" (Bathory)

"Well. Wouldn't it be better if we work together? After all, you say the Fissure cannot be closed no matter what. In that case, why not we help each other out?" (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin smiled confidently.

Bathory stared back at him wordlessly.

However, all those ugly, angry creases on her face from a moment ago had vanished, replaced by her dumbfounded expression.

Chapter 160

Mah-in (1)

On a river, with a calm breeze gently blowing by.

Sae-Jin accompanied Kim Sun-Ho to the Seom River near the county of Hoengseong. They came here to scatter Kim Yu-Sohn's ashes on the river according to his will.

At the upstream of the river, it was shallow enough to make them wonder whether renting a boat was strictly necessary, but as they neared the midstream, they were glad that they did.

SFX for a small boat cutting through water

The duo moved forward while silently enjoying the sounds their seemingly cobbled-together tiny boat made as it parted the water's surface.

With a soft breeze tickling his face, Sae-Jin stood on the deck and took in the breathtakingly beautiful scenery of the mother nature, the wondrous scenic spots carved out by the flow of the river itself.

"My mom and dad met here for the first time, or so I heard. Dad must've been longing to come here, even in his dreams." (Kim Sun-Ho)

Kim Sun-Ho spoke as he brushed the river's surface with his hand. His voice was drowning in old memories.

Sae-Jin smiled imperceptibly.

"Well, he must have been happy, the place for their first meeting being this beautiful and all." (Sae-Jin)

"Haha... yes, it must be so. Oh, yeah, by the way. I've always thought this, but I'm a lot older than you, Guild Master, yet it feels like you're more mature than I am." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"Hmm... Maybe, it's because I've lost both of my parents a long time ago? It's like, I've learned the life's bitterest lesson very early on in my life... However, *hyung-nim*. I'm telling you it's okay to speak plainly with me." (Sae-Jin)

"Eii. I'll get mighty uncomfortable real fast if I do that. Please don't mention that. Ever." (Kim Sun-Ho)

".....Fuu-woo."

With the end of that conversation, they didn't speak anymore. They had nothing much to say, anyways. They didn't feel any awkwardness either, however. They simply enjoyed the beautiful sights and the much-needed respite from all the madness plaguing the world lately.

And as they silently let the time tick away, Kim Sun-Ho suddenly asked him a question.

"Should we do this together?" (Kim Sun-Ho)

He was talking about the ashes. Sae-Jin smiled bitterly and shook his head.

"No, that should be Mister Sun-Ho's role." (Sae-Jin)

"....."

Kim Sun-Ho nodded his head without saying a word. Then, he scattered the ashes of his father on the river. The grey-white ashes floated innocently on the surface and soon, descended to the floor, disappearing from the view.

And at the same time, a single tear drop formed on the eye of Kim Sun-Ho and gleamed like a lone star, as he continued to look on at the disappearing ashes.

Sae-Jin quickly averted his gaze.

As if the distant trees dotting the mountainside had felt the encroaching Autumn, their leaves were being dyed in a cacophony of colours.

Sae-Jin understood why Kim Yu-Sohn wanted his ashes scattered around here.

It was that beautiful.



Sae-Jin returned to his everyday life while still unable to shake off that forlorn emotion clinging on to him. He'd like to take a good rest after his mind got frayed a lot recently, yet his surroundings didn't let him have one. As ever, the chaotic world demanded lots of things from him – artifacts, weapons, Mercenaries, Griffins, potions, and now, even grimoires...

"Ah, I almost forgot. Oppa, they say Hero Orcs have been found alive." (Yu Sae-Jung)

After Sae-Jin ended his business call with Jo Hahn-Sung, Yu Sae-Jung laid her head down on his lap, before telling him this news. Immediately, Sae-Jin snapped out from the mental fatigue and opened his eyes wide.

"Really?" (Sae-Jin)

"Ng. I hear they rescued another young Knight recently." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Around where?" (Sae-Jin)

He thought they had all died after getting mixed up in that huge explosion. Well, in that battle against the Three-Headed Ogre, the site of the Orc village got obliterated, after all.

"Apparently, near where their old village used to be. I hear they are rebuilding it from the ground up." (Yu Sae-Jung)

".....What a relief." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin breathed out a sigh of relief. He thought that he should go there soon, since he was looking for a capable substitute to mass produce weapons for him.

Yu Sae-Jung studied him with curious eyes before continuing on with her eyes.

"Ah, right. Oppa, didn't you say you have something important to do today?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"I've postponed it." (Sae-Jin)

".....Ng? But was that something you can postpone that easily? Didn't you say you were

going to meet the Spanish Ambassador?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

To be more specific, it wasn't the Ambassador, but the Prime Minister of Spain. The meeting was to discuss a variety of matters including reaching an agreement regarding potion supply, as well as to finalise all the deals, and that was why the Spanish Prime Minister saw fit to personally fly over here.

Unfortunately, the timing sucked as Kim Yu-Sohn had passed on so the date had to be postponed somewhat.

"It couldn't be helped. You also know why, right?" (Sae-Jin)

Kim Yu-Sohn was an official member of The Monster Guild. Plus, he was also the very first Director of Operations for the Mercenary Company as well, meaning that many newspapers had to express their condolences on his passing on the front pages of their publications.

Thinking about him made Sae-Jin even more depressed.

Letting go of an important person was, indeed, a painful thing to do.

"Oppa?"

Yu Sae-Jung lifted her head after seeing the shadow descend upon Sae-Jin's expressions.

".....Uh, uh?"

She then pushed him down in the blink of an eye. After he fell down on the bed, a pair of rather soft sensations pressed down on his face.

He'd been wondering for a while now, but seriously, her twins had definitely grown bigger than when he first met her. Did she get an operation or something...?

"I heard that guys like it when girls do this." (Yu Sae-Jung)

Sae-Jin chuckled after hearing her praise-worthy words.

"You learned something nice." (Sae-Jin)

He wrapped his arms around her waist, while she hugged his head tightly.

Now that he was rubbing his face on a pair so soft and wonderful, a pair that made him happy simply by looking at them, his depressed mind seemed to regain some of its former brightness.

“By the way, they seem to be a bit bigger than before?” (Sae-Jin)

“...I borrowed my Trait’s powers a little bit. And I plan to do so from now on, too.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung declared resolutely. Sae-Jin guffawed out and closed his eyes shut. His head settled down, and as he felt relaxed, sleep began to creep up on him.

And just as he slowly drifted towards the bliss of slumber...

Out of the blue, Yu Sae-Jung’s sharp, questioning voice cut into his dimming consciousness.

“Ah, that’s right. Oppa, aren’t you meeting up with Knight Kim Yu-Rin way too often these days?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“...*Slurp*, what are you talking about?” (Sae-Jin)

And he was about to fall asleep, too. Sae-Jin slurped back his drool and shook his head.

“You’ve been eating out with her frequently, right? Also taking lots of photos, too. At this rate, you might get to start a scandal way before me, don’t you think so?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Up until a minute ago, she was the very personification of ‘model wife’, yet now, she was being sarcastic while glaring at him. Since she was looking down on him, it was kind of threatening for some reason. However, he still found her rather adorable.

Sae-Jin grinned and shook his head again.

“It’s simply because of work.” (Sae-Jin)

He couldn’t help it – he had no one else beside Kim Yu-Rin to discuss things with. He didn’t have much to talk about with the currently-bereaved Kim Sun-Ho, Hazeline was crazy-busy with the daily operations of the Wizard Tower, while Yu Baek-Song was just too childish. But on the other hand, Kim Yu-Rin was rich with experience having taken

command on many different missions, plus she instilled confidence and trust as well.

If she was a man, then Sae-Jin would've worshipped him as a true *hyung-nim*.

“Seriously, it's always ‘work’” (Yu Sae-Jung)

While complaining that she had yet another rival to watch out for, Yu Sae-Jung pulled out her phone. At first, she loitered around Sae-Jin's SNS profile with its over 150 million followers, before beginning her spying operation on Kim Yu-Rin's profile that only had one-tenth of his followers.

Out of ten photos recently uploaded on the profile, eight of them were taken with Sae-Jin present. And it was said that Kim Yu-Rin's followers rapidly increased precisely because of this.

“Wah, this is so unbelievable. Look, what is this? I never imagined *Seuseung-nim* would be like this, but this is just too much. She's got more than three million followers than me.” (Yu Sae-Jung) (*TL: a seuseung-nim is similar to “sensei” in Japanese. However, in this context, it's being used sarcastically. No idea why the term was invoked here, though – not like Kim Yu-Rin taught Yu Sae-Jung anything...*)

“And what's bothering you so much like this...” (Sae-Jin)

“It's fine. Please be quiet.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Blurting out a blunt answer, Yu Sae-Jung stopped looking at SNS and moved on to news channels. She wanted to see if there were any stories that might sounded like a scandalous gossip, but rather than that, she found something else just as interesting instead.

“.....Ah, excuse me, Oppa? A mass armed unrest broke out in Spain just now.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Eh? Why?” (Sae-Jin)

“Hmm... ‘Due to the inept diplomatic skills of the leaders, the meeting with Kim Sae-Jin has been cancelled, and so...’ Uhm, Oppa, is Spain going to be alright at this rate?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“.....”

Two of them remained silent afterwards.



It turned out, having a renowned fame and being able to influence the world wasn't all roses and happy smiles.

Sae-Jin hurriedly held the promised meeting with the Spanish Prime Minister. The PM wasn't someone who could move his schedule around that easily, yet he came running over in less than the proverbial single breath.

During this hurried-up meeting, the deal to export potions, several weapons of the Orc Blacksmith, as well as lending of Griffins got finalised. And so, Sae-Jin got to receive the Spanish PM's heartfelt thanks, and hear the news regarding the unrest in Spain finally coming under control.

Really, it was a huge relief.

But he still didn't have time to take it easy. That question he threw quite carelessly at the funeral, well, Bathory ended up saying yes to it. She then came to see him in the underground conference room on the following week.

"Hiya." (Bathory)

"....."

When Bathory stepped into the conference room, thick silence fell.

"What is going on...?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin cautiously asked. Sae-Jin shrugged his shoulders and pointed at the newspaper on top of the conference table. On the headline, big letters shouting out 'Mah-in, another one appears' were clearly written for all to see.

"No way, that woman is responsible for that, too...?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

"Hey, you've got a bad mouth on ya, haven't you. Who's 'that woman' here?" (Bathory)

"Hiiieeeck."

Bathory approached her while showing a bit of anger. Yi Hye-Rin couldn't even meet her gaze and simply trembled in fear.

"You don't have to get scared, though? She's here to lend us a helping hand. Look at it as her repaying the favour of us successfully killing the Lord back then." (Sae-Jin)

"Right. That's correct. I don't wanna become a Lord who can't keep her promises, you see. I also don't like what the idiots of el Las are doing, either." (Bathory)

Bathory sat down on her seat. Then, crossed her legs and leaned her back on the seatback. But, before she could say something, her eyes radiated a dangerous glint after finding Cornlak lying on the conference room floor.

She fake coughed a couple times, and took a long look at Cornlak, before turning her head towards Sae-Jin's direction. She slowly asked him.

"...Who does this creature belong to?" (Bathory)

"Ah, well, he's the result from one of my Skills. For now, he's like the conference room NPC." (Sae-Jin)

"Is that so?" (Bathory)

Bathory licked her lips seductively. Her eyes were full of avarice.

"Give it to me." (Bathory)

"No, you mustn't!!" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Suddenly, Kim Yu-Rin shot up from her seat and shouted out. Even Bathory got stunned by her boldness.

"...What the heck?" (Bathory)

"What do you mean, a conference room NPC? Cornlak is our family!!" (Kim Yu-Rin)

She shouted out passionately, and embraced Cornlak. Although it looked more like she was currently captured by a giant wolf instead, but whatever, her actions seemed quite desperate nonetheless. As if this whole thing seemed ridiculous, Bathory broke out in a hollow chuckle.

“Huh. What’s up with her...” (Bathory)

“No, you can’t!!” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin shouted out even louder. Unfortunately for her, though – that was the wrong response in this case. Now normally, a personality where wanting to forcibly take away something precious from someone would be referred to as ‘rotten’, and well, Bathory was the shining beacon of a such rotten personality.

Bathory’s face hardened into a terrifying expression and she stood up from her seat. Then, with a threatening voice, she matter-of-factly handed down an order.

“...Give it to me. Right now.” (Bathory)

And so, for a short while, a tussle broke out over Cornlak’s fate.



The clash over Cornlak’s ownership ended in Bathory’s favour.

Bathory got drunk on the euphoria of victory and a sense of superiority while looking at the unstoppably sobbing Kim Yu-Rin, but Sae-Jin simply cancelled the summoning as soon as Bathory returned home with Cornlak, and then summoned the giant wolf back into the conference room.

Not too long after that, Bathory contacted him with a somewhat apologetic voice, saying that Cornlak must’ve ran away from her home.

Regardless of what transpired afterwards, Sae-Jin still deployed The Monster’s information network using the info Bathory had brought along.

And since the intelligence operatives of The Monster possessed excellent capabilities, the whereabouts of the el Las were uncovered pretty quickly.

The fake identity of the el Las’s leader was the son of some pharmaceutical company’s CEO. And his retainers were ‘employees’ of the said company.

“So, what are you going to do now?” (Bathory)

Bathory asked Sae-Jin, and his head tilted slightly as he asked back.

“What were you thinking of doing?” (Sae-Jin)

“Kill them all, obviously.” (Bathory)

“...Don’t you have any other thoughts besides ‘kill’ or ‘let them live’ in your head?” (Sae-Jin)

“Well, do you have a better whatever? Don’t take us Vampires too lightly, you.” (Bathory)

Sae-Jin dumbfoundedly stared at Bathory for a bit, before extracting an energy bar from his pocket.

“What’s this?” (Bathory)

“You hungry?” (Sae-Jin)

“...Not really.” (Bathory)

“Then feed it to one of your subordinates.” (Sae-Jin)

From Bathory’s perspective, this was no different than some unexpected dog’s bark, so her face crumpled quite badly.

“And why should I?” (Bathory)

“This is food exclusively developed for Vampires. As long as I can solve the issue of sustenance, you don’t have to return to your former world, am I right?” (Sae-Jin)

“...What did you just say?” (Bathory)

Sae-Jin expected to be beaten up somewhat by her, with her saying that he had crossed the line needlessly or some such.

“...You lost your bloody mind, haven’t you?” (Bathory)

Unfortunately, on that day...

Kim Sae-Jin was beaten to a pulp, right up to the death’s doorstep. No, he really, seriously got beaten up until inches from dying. If he didn’t have potions, he might

have really kicked the bucket from trauma alone.

Bathory also felt the same pain as Sae-Jin felt, yet she didn't stay her hands. Not at all.

Only then did Sae-Jin realise the important fact – that was, the 'home world' was her so-called reverse scale. He should never, ever broach this subject at all.

At the end, she ruthlessly stepped on the back of Sae-Jin, who was lying sprawled on the floor like a corpse, and announced that she would cancel their cooperation deal if he pulled another crap like this, before leaving him there.

Chapter 161

Mah-in (2)

The el Las used the Vampire-specific approach of sleep deprivation and mind control magic to make success of their many business ventures. Among those ventures, several were famous enough for many a job seeker to recognise their names outright. Truly, it was the case of ‘the base of an oil lamp is the darkest’.

A certain day in the middle of October.

Sae-Jin deliberately went for a day out near the vicinity of the pharmaceutical company owned by the el Las. Outwardly, it was to hold a business meeting, but the truth was, it was in order to snatch an important figure from the ranks of the el Las clan.

After ending the “sham” meeting with the Dawn’s representatives, Sae-Jin and his bodyguard for the day, Kim Yu-Rin, headed off to a restaurant well known to the locals. Named [The Master of Seafood], this sushi restaurant was positioned in such a way that the pharmaceutical company’s front entrance was clearly visible from Sae-Jin’s seat.

“Guild Master, will you please look over here?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

As he studied the company’s front view via the restaurant’s windows, Kim Yu-Rin, sitting in front, called out to him. When he took a glance, she was pointing the camera lens on her phone towards his direction.

“Say cheese~.”

Sae-Jin forced the corners of his lips to rise, and sure enough, with a soft *click*, she took a photo.

As if she was satisfied with the resulting shot, she nodded her head and moved her fingers quite rapidly. He didn’t have to look to know what she was doing right now. She was uploading the pic to her SNS profile.

“...You seem to be really active in SNS nowadays.” (Sae-Jin)

He spoke in a courteous voice that featured a spoonful of sarcasm as well. She finished uploading the photo, and then formed a wry smile while scratching the back of her neck.

“Ah, well, the thing is, I only started this because the Knights Order asked me to... But after I entered The Monster Guild and started uploading photos taken with Guild Master, the number of my followers suddenly exploded upwards. And I’ve got over ten million now... So, like, I can’t disappoint all my loyal followers now, can I?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Sae-Jin chuckled loudly after hearing an excuse that could have only come from Kim Yu-Rin.

“You must find it enjoyable, then.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Yup. This, it’s a whole new different world.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

After adding “there are always reasons why a medium would take off”, she returned to her phone. She was checking out the reactions of the followers that were popping up in real time.

“Still, please do it in moderation. Sae-Jung is worried about a scandal breaking out between you and I.” (Sae-Jin)

“Eiii, which dumb reporter would dare to ‘cause’ a scandal with you, Guild Master?... Ah, also, please consider what you’ve done in the past. You should be ready to endure this much, at least.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

...Well, with that reasoning, Sae-Jin had no excuse to offer. What he did was no different from making an utter fool out of her by swapping back and forth between the Orc Form and the human’s appearance. He should be grateful that she forgave him without resorting to performing acts of violence on his person.

“...Cough. Do what you like. I’ll even let you take a photo of me without a shirt on, if you want.” (Sae-Jin)

“Fuu fuu fuu. Thank you very much~.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin formed a pretty smile before snapping yet another photo.

Seriously, after she began doing SNS, and also after giving up on the future Guild Master position, she had become twice as more outgoing than before. Since such a thing was quite charming to behold, he thought it was kind of *troubling*, though.

And so, they chatted for the next ten minutes, and just as the ordered food filled up their dining table...

Employees began streaming out from the company as the office hours drew to a close.

Sae-Jin activated the Eyes of the Wolf and studied all the faces as thoroughly as he could. And as expected, just about every one of the employees emitted a very faint trace of blood, with the imperceptible dark energy hovering right above them.

"They are indeed Vampires, alright. I don't know how many are within the company itself, but 153 is a seriously high number, wouldn't you say?" (Sae-Jin)

"Right, that is correct, but... Was there a need for you to personally come here today?"
(Kim Yu-Rin)

"Unfortunately, the intelligence operatives can't distinguish Vampires all that well."
(Sae-Jin)

He had developed a tool to suss out Vampires way back when, but somehow, they had figured out a cunning method to evade detection.

It was then.

Sae-Jin discovered a b*stard with a particularly strong scent of blood as well as possessing an overwhelming amount of dark energy. And this sense of incongruity was coming off from an imported luxury saloon car driving past the front of the sushi joint.

He hurriedly pulled out the communication crystal to inform the waiting operatives hidden somewhere.

"The man riding on that Ferrache – the aura coming off from that guy is the strongest. Make him your primary target, please." (*TL: Lol. Ferrache. The author knows how to skirt copyright issues...*)

He heard the confirmation coming from the crystal. Sae-Jin lowered his chopsticks and stood up.

“Let’s get going as well.” (Sae-Jin)

“.....??”

But Kim Yu-Rin tilted her head.

“But there’s so much food left, though?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Eh?”

True, there were quite a lot of stuff they hadn’t finished yet, but they actually didn’t come here to eat...

The wide-eyed Kim Yu-Rin hurriedly waved her hands around, telling him not to misunderstand her intentions.

“No, no, I’m not saying we should finish everything here, but it’s just that, vacating our seats so early might rouse suspicions, you know? Besides, kidnapping the target is the role of the operatives, anyway.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“.....Hmm.”

Since what she said made sense, somewhat, Sae-Jin sat back down again. And he slowly began savouring the raw sushi.

About twenty minutes later, all that sushi filling up the table was gone.

Sae-Jin only got to eat around ten pieces. The rest entered Kim Yu-Rin’s tummy. Seriously now, wasn’t this some sort of public crime to shove four portions of sushi with every gulp?

Whatever the case may have been, after safely negotiating through the meal somehow, Sae-Jin settled the bill and they headed off to the parking lot.

“Please get in... What the?!” (Sae-Jin)

But when he turned around while holding the car’s door open, Kim Yu-Rin wasn’t

there.

When he searched around for her, he saw her hurriedly running towards his position, and for some reason, her arms were full of ‘hot bars’, too. (*TL: Fish cake bars are called “hot bars” in Korea. Google it, it looks rather delicious.*)

“I spotted them on the way, and they smelled nice, so... Would you like some?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

As soon as Sae-Jin looked at her with disbelieving eyes, Kim Yu-Rin shyly replied and cautiously offered a hot bar to him.

However, an expression that said ‘I wanna eat them, so refuse my offer’ was written very large on her face.

He wasn’t planning to eat one anyways, but... he still received it. Indeed, she seemed to have asked him out of courtesy, because she began pouting almost immediately. Sae-Jin smirked and returned the hot bar back to her.

“I need to drive.” (Sae-Jin)

“Ah, what a pity. I shall finish them for you, then.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Her face softened right away.

“Please, get in.” (Sae-Jin)

As he switched on the ignition, a communication arrived on the crystal.

– “*We’ve secured the target.*”

“Oh? Already?” (Sae-Jin)

“*Chomp, chomp.* As eespeted of de Monsta’s opheratibes. Reely ekseptional.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...Please speak after you finish chewing, first.” (Sae-Jin)



Right next day.

The kidnapped member of the el Las clan, the young Elder 'Daniel Kim' told them everything after falling under the control of Bathory's mind magic.

"It seems that, the ones responsible for summoning Doo-Urk-Shi-Nees in America back then were the agents of el Las, and that Jin Seh-Hahn also perished at their hands as well." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"Is that true?" (Sae-Jin)

Receiving Kim Sun-Ho's report, Sae-Jin's head tilted in confusion. It seemed that pretty much every incident that happened to him was the handiwork of the el Las, so he couldn't help but wonder just what the Bathorys were doing until now.

"Yes, boss. We also learned that nearly half of the upper echelons of Eden are under the el Las's grip as well. Using the records of Eden, they approached Mah-ins, and on the location right under the pharmaceutical company building, they are researching the methods to rip open the Fissure wider with the participating Mah-ins. Those Mah-ins that caused unrest are the ones that found the research frustrating and ran away from the facility."

Kim Sun-Ho handed over the documents containing the relevant information.

This much was enough. By submitting this evidence to the government, Sae-Jin would be able to earn their cooperation in catching the members of the el Las clan.

But the problem was what to do with them afterwards. How would they deal with that many Vampires?

And he sure as hell didn't feel like quietly slaughtering them in some remote location just like what Bathory had suggested.

"That's right. What's happening with that project?" (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin asked, as a thought popped up in his head during his mullings of the troublesome future. About a month ago, TM submitted to the Korean government its plans to supply the 'energy bars' to the incarcerated Vampires.

"I need to ask Mister Jo Hahn-Sung for a more detailed report, but... starting from next week, they are planning to replace the swine blood with the bars, or so I hear." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"Oh, that sounds promising." (Sae-Jin)

Vampires only drank human blood and didn't even spare a glance at the livestock blood at all. Most of the public criticised such clear display of arrogance, but if one were to take into account Vampires' unusual 'eating habits', such a thing couldn't be helped, really.

Even humans wouldn't touch the literal sh*t just because of their hunger. To Vampires, animal blood was even more disgusting than excrements of humans.

"That sure is a relief to hear. And we're almost done with developing various different flavours, yes?" (Sae-Jin)

"Yes, boss. By utilising the Wizards working in the Wizard Tower, the speed of research has been increased by a huge margin, apparently. Oh, and the flavour of the energy bars to be supplied to the prison is grilled pork belly." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"Very good." (Sae-Jin)

With a satisfied smile, Sae-Jin leaned back on the chair.

His goal wasn't too far now.

As long as he could coax Bathory, as long as he could turn that nonsensical power into the ally of humanity...

He would be able to make the words of the dying Vampire Lord come true – 'the monster, Bathory, will become the hero.'



And a week later, the news of energy bars being supplied to the only prison in the country designed to imprison Vampires, the Gunsan, got circulated in the media.

Even the public that debated endlessly on whether to kill every single Vampire out there, or to reconcile with those who could, watched with great deal of interest on the

success of this mysterious energy bar.

Two weeks later, the warden of the Gunsan Penitentiary stepped in front of the gathered reporters to speak about the results.

Even Sae-Jin made an unprecedented appearance to this specially-prepared room for the press conference located in the prison. Unfortunately for the warden, he was under dizzying pressure after having a man reputedly possessing more influence than the country's president stand before him.

The warden rubbed his pounding chest and swallowed nervously. He even took in several deep breaths before finally opening his mouth.

"I believe that the interest in this matter is quite exceptional, so I shall get right to the topic... On the first day of supplying the energy bars from TM to the prisoners, as expected, Vampires refused to comply." (Warden)

Several reporters who had prematurely determined that the experiment was a failure let off sighs of lamentation.

"But, through hard work of the guards, a few Vampires began eating the bars." (Warden)

'Hard work'.

That was written on the script. But the warden chose to not follow it.

"...No, truthfully, we forcibly fed it to them." (Warden)

Camera flashes went off like crazy.

"And we have been doing that for a week." (Warden)

The warden took his time, causing the gathered people to hold their breaths as well.

"And then, Vampires began voluntarily asking for the energy bars on their own." (Warden)

As the warden spoke with a smile on his face, the sounds of reporters cheering on rang around the conference room. Sae-Jin confirmed that the warden wasn't lying and

breathed out in relief as well.

Kuongkwahng, kuongkwang –

Sae-Jin did his best to calm his wildly pounding heart.

“Of course, we do not know whether this change is because the only thing they could compare to is the blood of livestock, but, I can say that the prisoners have expressed their satisfaction in the energy bars. They say it tastes better than human blood.” (Warden)

That was expected. Vampires had never ever tasted any other type of food before, so the taste of grilled pork belly must’ve been an eye opener to them.

“And so, here we are, two weeks later. The number of riots that break out in a daily basis has decreased from the highs of several dozens to barely one. And those are the works of new prisoners who haven’t tasted the energy bars yet.” (Warden)

Sae-Jin couldn’t control his surging emotions and ended up clapping his hands. Even the politicians that had followed and took up the seats right beside him smiled brightly and clapped their hands as well.

“We are told that the purpose of incarceration is to rehabilitate the convicted criminals. But, serving as the warden of the prison dedicated to Vampires, I always found such an opinion sceptical at best. For the first time in my life, I thought that very idea, the one about rehabilitating Vampires, might work.” (Warden)

The warden ended the press conference with those words and climbed off the stage. Then, he reached out to shake Sae-Jin’s hand while saying how grateful he was. The politicians, full of smiles until now, suddenly became all venom-eyed and reacted over the top, questioning how dare he do that, but Sae-Jin ignored them and firmly grasped the warden’s hand.

“Thank you, for all your hard work.” (Sae-Jin)

Hearing Sae-Jin’s praise, the warden resolutely shook his head.

“No, sir. It’s me who should be thanking you.” (Warden)

Without a doubt, this handshake was being broadcast through various TV stations in

real time.

What would Vampires, most importantly Bathory, be thinking about while watching this moment play out?

Sae-Jin couldn't wait to find out.

Chapter 162

Mah-in (3)

“Oh, it’s indeed quite delicious. This is so unreal.” (Rhosrahdel)

Rhosrahdel continued to speak words of praise as he diligently chewed on the energy bar. Him of less than five minutes ago that busy threw a tantrum not wanting to eat one of those, was like a completely different person from another dimension compared to now.

“Is it more delicious than a blood pack?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin, with her eyes going round in curiosity, asked him.

“Well, it is far cheaper, that’s for sure.” (Rhosrahdel)

Until now, Rhosrahdel had purchased – through definitely legal means – blood packs and used them for sustenance. However, the expense was quite enormous. Five packs a day would come down to way past \$9000 every month just for his food bills...

“It’s a flavour I’ve never tasted before, so I do find it quite interesting. But, I also think it could get a bit monotonous after a while. You said this is the grilled pork flavour?” (Rhosrahdel)

“Yeah. I think the taste’s really close. But seriously now, you can’t eat normal food, like, ever?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Yes. If I eat ‘normal food’, I will die because I won’t be able to digest them properly.” (Rhosrahdel)

To be more specific, regular food couldn’t be digested and would continuously pile up within the digestive tract, until causing his death through suffocation.

Yi Hye-Rin got shocked by the revelation and hurriedly asked.

“You’ll really die?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“Of course.” (Rhosrahdel)

“...Uh-whew.”

Yi Hye-Rin’s expression crumpled. She always thought that enjoying good food was one of the life’s greatest repeatable joys, so such a thing sounded like an unenviable fate to her.

It was around here that Joo Ji-Hyuk decided to cut in between the two sharing a rather intimate chat, after observing the duo with an uncomfortable face.

“I think that if you commercialise this energy bar amongst the army and Knights Order personnel, they will really latch on to this.” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

Sae-Jin shrugged his shoulders before answering him.

“Oh, right. Yes, I might do just that. I’m thinking about it.” (Sae-Jin)

Invented through mobilising all the top-tier artifacts from TM as well as its talented workforce, this energy bar’s pricing was set at ₩6000 (\$5.58) each, limited only to Vampires. Since this price was deliberately set low in order to ensure the buyers would get to eat three meals a day, the profit earned was nearly zero when all the capital invested in the project was taken into account.

“But if I do decide to sell it to the public, then the price will be higher than the amount set for the Vampires.”

The Wizards of the Wizard Tower are being worked full-time at the moment, and because of their profession being what it was, there was no helping with their high labour cost at the moment.

For now, a certain bait was being dangled in front, the one that promised one of the Bangbae-Dong grimoires number 1 to 10 could be *rented* out without going through the waiting period, if the Wizard put in 100 hours manufacturing the bars. But still, the profession of Wizards was one of the high-flying careers that demanded a minimum of \$100 thousand as yearly salary, so...

Joo Ji-Hyuk stared at the energy bar with greedy eyes and asked again.

“Then, pricing it how much would get you a profit margin? We at Dawn should

purchase a whole bunch, no matter how much one costs. I mean, hunger is an enemy we can't ignore during those raids that take a long time to complete." (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

".....Hmm. I should ask Mister Hahn-Sung for a more detailed info, but well, around ₩50000 per bar? (\$46.50) Maybe there, or a bit more." (Sae-Jin)

"Oh. In that case, I'd like to buy a few for myself, as well as for my subordinates." (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

Subordinates.

When Joo Ji-Hyuk climbed up to the position of the top Knight in his order, he also became the so-called Captain of a team. Naturally, he commanded around fifteen subordinates now. As a result, his pride and sense of duty had become even more pronounced compared to before.

Sae-Jin smiled brightly as he gazed at Joo Ji-Hyuk.

"Your subordinates must be glad to have you as their superior officer." (Sae-Jin)

A smile spread on Joo Ji-Hyuk's lips as well. Meanwhile, Yi Hye-Rin's face blushed a bit as she glanced at him.

Seeing these two, who had been openly flirting yet went absolutely nowhere fast until now, Sae-Jin felt slightly frustrated in his heart.



The average number of energy bars produced in a day totalled 600 thousand. Considering that the number of Vampires living in around the world amounted to roughly 200 thousand, one could say they shouldn't worry about lack of supplies for having three meals a day.

However, it was inevitable that there would be hardline Vampires who refused to eat these energy bars. So, in order to dispose of the leftover stock that came about after supplying the willing buyers, Sae-Jin asked Knights Orders if they were interested as well.

The Dawn and the Raven Knights Orders were the first to order over 20 thousand bars for their personnel. When this news got around, many overseas Orders tripped over

themselves to get to TM's checkout counter as quickly as possible.

The pricing for one energy bar was set at ₩70000. (\$65.10)

The business venture that had very little prospect for profit, suddenly began generating some amount of revenue stream.

Also, rumours of rift forming within the Vampire society due to the advent of this energy bar could be heard as well.

The reason for them wanting to return to their homeworld – the main reason why they ended up rejecting the society, had been solved out of the blue, so perhaps this development was the obvious next step.

Unfortunately for Sae-Jin, no matter how long he waited, he hadn't received any word from the most important Vampire of them all, Bathory.

"...There hasn't been any contact from Bathory's side, yes?" (Sae-Jin)

Currently, inside the underground conference room, where all of The Monster's agendas were decided.

Sae-Jin asked Kim Sun-Ho.

"Yes, boss. Other than handing over a map with the coordinates for the el Las's underground research centre through Rhosrahdel, there has been none." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"Hmm... By the way, exactly how many members are there in the Bathory clan?" (Sae-Jin)

"Two thousand living in Korea, and over ten thousand if all the indirect relations around the world are counted, boss." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"That's more than I expected." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin was slightly taken aback. Since she didn't seem to have too many active 'agents', he expected the overall numbers to be low as well.

"What about the rest?" (Sae-Jin)

"The el Las is thirty thousand..." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"There are fifty thousand of us. Twenty thousand are outside Korea, but after receiving news that the underground city has been completed, they are entering the country as soon as they can." (Lillia)

Lillia replied instead of Kim Sun-Ho while sitting on the corner of the couch. As expected of the Nosferatus – he did think that there were a lot more Vampires in the underground city of late.

Kim Sun-Ho took a glance at her and then continued.

"...Yes, boss, she's correct. The rest are Vampires not affiliated with any other clans, and a fair number of them happen to be inmates, as well." (Kim Sun-Ho)

"So that's how it is... Oh, before I forget, Miss Lillia, which date did you say the Nosferatus would hold a press conference?" (Sae-Jin)

Lillia assumed a bright smile at Sae-Jin's query.

"In a week's time. I'm assuming you'll be in attendance?" (Lillia)

Through a democratic process, Nosferatus had decided to publicly announce their intention to adopt the energy bars as their main source of sustenance and to integrate back into human society.

Their plan also included opening up their rather stunning underground city to the outsiders and earn tourist avenue, which would aid in creating a sustainable Vampire society in the long term – after the Goblin village have been moved elsewhere, of course.

"Yes, of course." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin replied in a reliable manner. At the same time, the message arrived that the Knights such as Kim Yu-Rin, Yi Hye-Rin, and Joo Ji-Hyuk, had entered the Guild building after finishing their duties for the day.

"Well then, let us get the meeting started – to find the way to take care of all the Mah-ins." (Sae-Jin)



In a dark room where a thick veil seemingly covered up everything, there was a single light source still existing within. It was the television, a wonderful box that helped to alleviate Bathory's boredom for a considerable length of time.

Even today, yesterday, and also two days ago.

From the rectangular box, the news of 'TM has invented energy bars that can be eaten by Vampires' continued to leak out.

Bathory was dazedly watching the footage play on.

Footages showing the process of how the energy bars were manufactured, and a Vampire eating the bar; even the footages showing the interviews with the incarcerated Vampires – all of them were showing happy, smiling faces that said the day when the humanity and Vampires reconcile wasn't too far away.

– *"This food will spread out to the rest of the world, with a sensible price, and for establishing a harmonious society for us all."*

With that final comment, footages came to an end. Bathory remained dazed as she stared at the TV screen for a long, long time.

Five minutes, ten minutes...

The ticking of the clock seemed monotonous yet very clear within this darkness.

Bathory finally opened her mouth after a lengthy deliberation.

"Hey, everyone."

Her targets this time were the convoy of Apostles always 'protecting' her. Actually, the Elders should have been performing this role, but there were none here. Bathory killed them all. Many of them chose the deceased Vampire Lord over the head of the clan, after all.

"Yes, my lady."

The eldest Apostle replied to her.

“What do you think about?” (Bathory)

“.....Of course, we should strive to return to our homeworld, my lady.”

The Apostle’s voice was trembling imperceptibly. It was the sign that, although he was sincere in his belief, he was being shaken at the same time.

“...So it is.” (Bathory)

Bathory murmured bitterly and pointed at the TV. From her smooth, refined finger, a thin red stream of energy leaked out and entered the TV. And flames erupted from its inside.

The TV that spat out uncomfortable news until not too long ago became a heap of ash in the blink of an eye.



After returning home, Sae-Jin sat on the bed while he waited for Yu Sae-Jung to come home as well. He was planning to tell her that old excuse about him going on a business trip for a couple of days – since he’d be participating in the cleaning up of the Mah-in threat.

However...

She didn’t want to show up, no matter how long he waited.

Seven o’clock, eight, nine, ten, then eleven...

The longer the hours ticked on, the hotter his head boiled, and his fists were clenching tighter automatically.

But finally, when the hour hand of the clock was about to touch ‘12’ – and just as Sae-Jin grabbed his phone after his anger finally erupted out...

SFX for a door stealthily opening up

The front door opened slightly.

And cautious footsteps even quieter than dust settling on the floor entered his ears.

Sae-Jin deliberately withheld his presence in the main bedroom.

Her footsteps seemed to circle around living room, bathroom and then, the kitchen. He then heard her breathe a sigh of relief as if she had confirmed that there was no one else in the house.

She must be under the mistaken belief that he was yet to return home, as Sae-Jin told her he was really busy nowadays.

"Ah, I'm so tiiiiired~."

Sae-Jin heard her slurred voice coming from just beyond the bedroom door. Just how much did she drink? His eyes narrowed to a sharp blade while glaring at the door. They resembled that of a wild predator, waiting for a prey to show up.

SFX for a door creaking open

"Yawn~..."

The door opened.

Yu Sae-Jung entered the room while leisurely yawning out, but then...

"@#%^!!!"

She fell down on her butt after discovering Sae-Jin sitting in the dark like a demon.

"O, Oppa, you were home already?!" (Yu Sae-Jung)

With one hand, she hurriedly tidied up her messy hair, while with the other, she hid her reddened face as her slurred, stuttering words rolled out. Sae-Jin wordlessly glared at her.

"....."

"Ah, uh, the thing is, I, uh, I ran into my old classmates and it's been a long time, so... It was such a nice little surprise so like, we were having fun and ended up, uh, a bit late than usual~?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"....."

He still maintained his silence.

"I, I can also have a fun day out, you know. Besides, I didn't stay out the whole night, right? It's still, uh, 11:59 now, there's still a minute left! A whole minute! And you always stay out overnight, too..." (Yu Sae-Jung)

She showed him the time with her phone.

Still, Sae-Jin didn't say anything.

"That... Uh..." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"....."

"Please say something. Did I do something hugely wrong here?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"....."

".....Sorry." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Fut."

Sae-Jin ended up chuckling at her rapid apology. As if Yu Sae-Jung was relieved as well, she sneaked up closer to the bed.

"...I'm home~." (Yu Sae-Jung)

She entered Sae-Jin's embrace while acting all *aegyo* and stuff. He asked her while gently rubbing her back.

"A reunion, huh? Did you have fun?" (Sae-Jin)

"Ng. I ended up recalling so many good memories, since I haven't seen them in such a long time." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Really? I thought you didn't have a lot of friends." (Sae-Jin)

".....But I do, four of them, as a matter of fact." (Yu Sae-Jung)

Having four friends as the only grandchild of a Chaebol, now that was a lot. Oh yes, it

sure was – Yu Sae-Jung declared as so and justified her reasoning.

“Oh, right. Don’t you have meetings regarding the Wizard Tower scheduled?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yeah, I do, but why do you ask?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“I got worried. I need to go on a business trip this week, but I am worried about you drinking way too much and then fooling around...” (Sae-Jin)

“...I ain’t gonna do that, so stop worrying.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

For a second there, did her eyes gleam rather dangerously?

“You seem to meet a lot of people lately?” (Sae-Jin)

“Ng. Lots of fun things are happening all the time now. There are the Guild meetings, then there are those Wizard Tower directors’ conference, too... It’s all because of Oppa’s hard work.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Sae-Jin smiled and patted her head.

“In that case, life should still be fun even without me around, am I right?” (Sae-Jin)

“...What the heck.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

He was only joking, but Yu Sae-Jung’s expressions rapidly cooled. It was a serious look completely devoid of any mischievousness that could be seen maybe once or twice in a year.

“Obviously, that’s not possible without Oppa around, because you are the reason why my life has become wonderful lately. Hunting Monsters, going out and having fun, but knowing that Oppa is waiting for me back home – also, that even if Oppa isn’t home, you’d be back soon anyways... Without those, I won’t be able to go on.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“...Really?” (Sae-Jin)

“That’s right. So, stay by my side for the rest of our lives, okay? And stop saying those unlucky things, too.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung spoke with a serious, determined face.

"Alright."

Sae-Jin nodded his head. Only then, she broke out into a warm smile and left a peck on his cheek. But that was only for a fleeting moment. Her eyes suddenly narrowed to a slit as she spoke.

"...Oh, and by the way. Yu-Rin Unni uploaded a photo to her SNS yesterday. You guys had sushi, huh?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

".....Ahaha, haha..."

"What's so funny?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

He awkwardly laughed. Then, he pressed her shoulders and pushed her down on the bed, stopping her interrogation efforts.

"Don't try to gloss over thi..... Eu-euph." (Yu Sae-Jung)

He didn't feel like sweating over small stuff right now.

He simply locked lips with her in a show of their love.

Sae-Jin proceeded to spend the night caressing the body of a woman he found even more beautiful with every passing day.

Chapter 163

Waves (1)

Good. Mor. Ning~~. Tingtingtingtingting, tingting...

“...Slurp, what the hell...” (Sae-Jin)

The smartphone alarm woke me up. I got slightly flustered – since it’s not often I sleep until the alarm wakes me up. Grabbing the phone with my right hand, I found out it was seven in the morning.

And I even scheduled a final strategy meeting at six in the morning today... Fearing the absolute worst, I checked the messages – and as expected, a ton of dissatisfied texts bombs from the Guild members – including Kim Yu-Rin, Hazeline, etc, etc – had piled up in the inbox.

I was about to get up in a hurry, but then, looked at my left arm that felt like something a little bit weighty was resting on it. Turned out to be Sae-Jung.

Was it because we were really giving it our all last night? Or should that be this morning, instead? Whatever, she was still completely submerged in her dreamland, her breathing calm and steady like a sleeping child. With not a shred of fabric covering her, she remained still as if she had fainted or some such.

“Must be cold.”

It would be fine to cover her with a blanket, but I embraced tightly instead. Her milky skin was so smooth and well, it felt really wonderful, too, almost to the point where I wanted to start ‘tormenting’ her for a bit longer.

“*Moan... *”

I pressed my cheek to hers and rubbed slowly, and only then, she squirmed this way and that, while showing signs of waking up. She looked so adorable wriggling around like this, so I hugged her even tighter.

Vrrrr...

I wanted to stay like this for as long as I could, but too bad, the phone began vibrating.

This time, it was a call. From Kim Yu-Rin, no less.

Right, I don't have the time to laze around like this. After kissing Sae-Jung's forehead, I stood up. As I got dressed, Sae-Jung hugged the pillow tightly and rubbed it all over, as if she felt the emptiness next to her.

"Cute."

I gently patted her restless back.

And after helping her fall back into the comforting arms of sleep, I left the house.



(TL: Perspective changed back to 3rd person.)

As soon as Sae-Jin arrived at the underground conference room, he had to withstand several scary stares all at once. Well, they did gather here at six in the morning, regardless of how insanely busy each one of them were, but then, the very person who called for the meeting in the first place was late by a hour and a half, so there was that.

"I'm truly sorry." (Sae-Jin)

He lowered his head and apologised sincerely before sitting down on the seat of honour.

"Oh, well. What can you do? No need to apologise. We just have to wait for you. You're the person in charge, after all." (Hazeline)

Those words came from the mouth of Hazeline, currently feeling prickly due to handling the daily running of the Wizard Tower.

"...Sorry." (Sae-Jin)

"I said, it's fine. Start the meeting already. You got delayed while *romancing* around, probably. I can tell without even looking." (Hazeline)

“.....”

Sae-Jin signaled Rhosrahdel with his eyes.

“Oh, uh, yes. I’ll start with the regular briefing first.” (Rhosrahdel)



Below the pharmaceutical company’s building, around two thousand Vampires affiliated with the el Las clan were concentrating on the deciphering & researching of a certain ancient tome, while the rest 28000 strutted around the outside world.

Taking that fact into account, it seemed like a bit of a stretch for ten people to face off against two thousand. Besides, even if they were able to fight them off, it would turn into a massacre during the process. That was a big no.

So, Sae-Jin devised a solution for this quandary.

And that was to teleport to the exact location where the clan’s head was hiding at, and use the isolation barrier to isolate and deal only with the head and his retainers.

This was the best plan they could come up with at the end of the lengthy meeting.

“Well, in that case.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin began preparing equipment and spoke.

“Let’s go and take them.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“...You mean, like right now?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

However, Yi Hye-Rin showed hesitation, her face flustered somewhat.

“Of course. Nothing good will come about by delaying this, after all.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“I haven’t prepared myself yet...” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“And what other preparations do you need?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

With an expression showing she couldn’t understand, Kim Yu-Rin looked around.

There were uber-expensive artifacts, potions, equipment, weapons and other things strewn about inside the conference room. Even with a slight exaggeration, everything here would fetch over ten billion dollars if stolen and sold on the black market.

But well, all Yi Hye-Rin did in response was to blush deeply while fidgeting helplessly with her fingers. While everyone stared at her with questioning looks, Joo Ji-Hyuk slowly stood up from his seat.

“Pardon me, Miss Yu-Rin?” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

“Yes?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

He called for her and whispered something to her ear. Only after that, she came to realise something important and became embarrassed, before letting off a couple of fake coughs and spoke up.

“I’m going to a convenience store for a little while. Hye-Rin-ah, would you like to come with me?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Uh? Ah, yes. I will.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“.....Oh.” (Sae-Jin)

Only then, Sae-Jin figured it out. During the meeting, he detected a thick smell of blood so he thought that Rhosrahdel must’ve been stealthily snacking on a blood pack, but it was actually the result of the Great Mother Nature’s magic.

Yi Hye-Rin whispered with a very small voice to Joo Ji-Hyuk, and vacated her seat.

“Thank you...” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Joo Ji-Hyuk didn’t say anything, just a smooth smile etched on his lips.



And after eight hours of rest time caused by that small event.

“Is everyone ready to go?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin asked his companions. They were tightly holding onto the Leviathan’s tail,

limbs and other parts.

““““Yes.””””

“Well, then. We’re teleporting now. Oh, right. Please do not forget that our aim is to ‘talk’. Fighting comes after if that fails.” (Sae-Jin)

Recalling the coordinates once more, Sae-Jin closed his eyes and imagined the scenery of the arrival point. Right then, a disgusting, unsettling sensation of space twisting apart washed over him.

The first thing he saw after opening his eyes, was a young boy.

A cute and innocent outer appearance, with his age that couldn’t be more than ten years old or so. The boy showed no surprise at the sudden arrival of the enemies, and simply stared at them with darkly-hooded eyes.

The boy looked like a lost little kid, but Sae-Jin heard enough about the leader of the el Las to know the truth. Sae-Jin immediately deployed the barrier.

And the space they were in got separated from the rest of the world, dying in jet-black colour.

The interior of the barrier followed the will of the caster. As if Sae-Jin had inadvertently remembered Yi Hye-Rin’s call of the Great Mother Nature, the interior of the barrier was transformed into a forest full of verdant trees and a small stream trickling by to the side.

Within this picturesque scenery, Sae-Jin stared at the boy and spoke.

“You’re the leader of the el Las, correct?” (Sae-Jin)

“.....I know about you.”

The boy’s words were quite literally out of the blue. That was why Sae-Jin couldn’t easily form an appropriate answer.

“You’re their son.”

Sae-Jin’s brows quivered.

“...What are you talking about now? Are you talking about me?” (Sae-Jin)

“If it’s not you, then who can be the child of *them*? ”

“...For someone who knows about that stuff, aren’t you a bit too young?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes, I am indeed too young. Anyone forty years old like me is considered a child in the el Las bloodline, after all. Since I was eight, my outer appearance has remained as you see.”

Sae-Jin inexplicably recalled something Bathory mentioned in the past. She said that there were unique quirks found among different Vampire bloodlines.

“The eternal youth, is that it?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes. But besides all that, aren’t you curious about the true story regarding your father?”

Of course, he was curious. Sae-Jin didn’t know what had happened in detail, so the curiosity drove him mad sometimes. But this wasn’t the right time to dig into that stuff.

“We didn’t come here to talk about stuff like that.” (Sae-Jin)

“Then, what topic did you wish to discuss so urgently that brings you here?”

Sae-Jin replied matter of factly.

“Mah-ins. And the Fissure.” (Sae-Jin)

“Ah. So that’s what you wanted to talk about.”

The facial expression of the ‘boy’ was languid, while his brows lifted up ever so slightly.

“My apologies, but negotiations are not possible. We have no intentions of letting go of the Fissure. Our one true aim always has been our homeworld.”

“But, why? Even if you don’t return to your homeworld, you should be able to live without too many issues just by waiting for a bit longer.” (Sae-Jin)

“Hmm... Well, it is impossible for us to live with others. But if I was allowed to explain

the reasoning, then your parents have to be brought into this discussion."

"What?" (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin's brows narrowed. The 'boy' didn't pay any mind and continued.

"It won't take long."

And so, the boy's story began. As he promised, it wasn't a lengthy tale.

Sae-Jin's father and mother, as the Knights of Eden, became involved in the so-called war with Vampires – operations to wipe out Vampires, in truth – and got deeply shaken to core by all the inhumane and senseless slaughtering they witnessed.

During one of the missions, they ran into him, the head of the el Las. And his pleading to their conscience resulted in him successfully duping them. It was all because of the 'great cause' of returning to the past version of their homeworld in order to change their fate, which certainly did not sound so bad on the surface.

So, the two of them aided el Las for a brief amount of time.

"However, when they came in contact with the Nosferatus, they betrayed us. I was really confused back then – the Nosferatus did not know our plans to widen the Fissure, after all.

"But somehow, they learned the truth. And they also gained this unshakeable belief in the process, as well. A belief so strong, your father even predicted that our plan will fail. That was why I killed him."

Sae-Jin glared deeply into the boy's eyes. Those unreadable eyes were eerily empty and completely devoid of feelings.

"But, after I killed him, I became deeply curious of just what the source of that great belief was. So, I furnished all the information regarding your father and left it in Eden. If the reason for that firm belief was a person, then perhaps, one day, wouldn't he show up to take a look? That's what my vague line of thought was."

A lightbulb went off inside Sae-Jin's head.

He felt like that the pieces were finally falling into their places now.

It would've not been difficult to destroy all the records since they had taken over Eden. Yet, the info about Sae-Jin's father was left as it was.

And the reason was...

"And then, he did come. Jin Seh-Hahn. I do not know what kind of connection this person had with your father, but regardless, he certainly possessed all the right qualities to become the foundation for that belief of him saving the world."

Sae-Jin's lips quivered slightly. Without a doubt, Jin Seh-Hahn's abilities and dignified appearance were enough to rouse such a misunderstanding – reaching the upper Mid Tier in less than six months, well, even Sae-Jin had to admit that it completely broke common sense.

"....." (Sae-Jin)

"Unfortunately, Jin Seh-Hahn was killed. We killed him. Do you all realise it now? There is no 'belief' for you anymore. There is no hope for you, either."

And so, this was the reason why this 'boy' told them of this short story of the past.

To let them know that el Las couldn't live with other races, and that there was no hope left for humanity.

"...So, you believed that and caused all this chaos?" (Sae-Jin)

"Yes."

"Ah, the thing is... Kind of sorry about this, but..." (Sae-Jin)

This time, it was Sae-Jin's turn to tell the truth.

"Jin Seh-Hahn didn't die, kid." (Hazeline)

Hazeline spoke up instead of Sae-Jin. Sae-Jin smirked and changed his appearance – into Jin Seh-Hahn's face, of course. The boy's face that was the very example of leisurely demeanor until now, finally crumpled to resemble an Asura. Even the rest of Sae-Jin's companions, who didn't know of the truth until now, got shocked out of their minds, too.

“You.....!!”

“So, your expression finally changed, huh.” (Sae-Jin)

Too bad, Sae-Jin and company didn’t have the time to take things easy.

SFX for things shooting out

From behind the boy that now resembled an angry devil, an unidentifiable tentacle shot out. It divided into ten and rapidly grabbed hold of every Guild member present.

“It’s called ‘Mugu’. The Lord had gifted us this self-defense weapon. Regrettably, not even the Lord himself expected to be under fire before anyone else, though.”

Sae-Jin transformed into the Leviathan Form. But no matter how hard he struggled, the grotesque tentacle remained tightly wound around him.

“That’s not going to work. Because...”

Just as the ‘boy’ was about to extol the unbelievable sturdiness of the ‘Mugu’...

The isolation barrier suddenly developed a crack, and at the same time, the Mugu got destroyed as well.

All of those events were caused by reddish Mana that weaved around the air like bloody mist.

“.....How utterly disgusting.” (Bathory)

A voice that was quite seductive and rather familiar at the same time.

The el Las leader fired dark coloured Mana Spears at the suddenly-appearing Bathory, but they simply melted into nothingness before even touching her skin.

“Fut. What the heck was that?” (Bathory)

She sniggered and with a simple flick of her finger, the entire body of the el Las leader got restrained to the spot.

“Kkeuh...”

"Better give up, kiddo," said Bathory.

The el Las 'boy' gritted his teeth.

"Again. Are you trying to kill your own species again?"

"Mm... There seems to be some sort of misunderstanding with what you're saying. Me, I decided not to see the clueless b*stards that get into bed with Mah-ins as the same species as me." (Bathory)

Instincts mired in violence and wicked desires, below-average intelligence, and finally, powers that couldn't be controlled properly – the creature beyond saving thanks to this trio of sins, that was a Mah-in. And Mah-ins were considered enemies of all races in existence.

Enemies to Vampires, Elves, humans, Soo-ins, et al. From the very beginning, Mah-ins were treated similarly to that of Monsters.

"...Then, why did you murder our Lord?"

Suddenly, Bathory's expression crumpled.

"Did the Lord collude with the Mah-ins, too?"

As if he found Bathory's fury quite enjoyable, the head of the el Las clan continued on.

"Our Lord was only seeking the road to our salvation, that was all."

"Why don't you shut up now. Stop testing my patience, kid." (Bathory)

"But you knew that better than anybody, didn't you? The Lord was your godfather, after all."

Finally, Bathory couldn't hold back anymore. The blood-red Mana coming out from her body crashed towards the 'boy' like a tsunami wave. However, he didn't try to avoid that onslaught of deadly Mana, and instead, accepted it with all his being.

And then, formed a smile.

At the same time, the floor of the research venue gave way and collapsed. Just below

the falling floor, the abyss-like Fissure where nothing could be seen in its darkness, a crack in space that existed between worlds, waited for them.

“...You, you crazy son of a bi*ch!!” (Bathory)

In that instant, Bathory’s eyes were dyed in panic after she figured out what the ‘boy’ was about to do.

“From here onwards, it’s your turn. I shall be waiting for you in our homeworld, Miss Bathory.”

The boy threw his body into the Fissure.

And the Fissure began to shake alarmingly, after swallowing el Las and Bathory’s Mana swirling within his body.

Chapter 164

Waves (2)

The ground turned to dust and disappeared, and the sky above burned in fierce red as it split apart. Disgusting mucous substance replaced the missing ground, and *something* jet-black wriggled disgustingly within it. Covered in some sort of a film waiting to hatch, this *something* glared at me with bloodshot eyes.

I felt fear for the very first time in my life when I looked into those terrifying eyes. I also realised in that moment, that there was no way to fight against such a monstrosity.

I must run away if I want to live.

Leaving behind all my memories, my regrets, wishes – and run away to another world altogether.

But I believed no human alive would grant a Vampire like me passage through a portal that could admit only a finite number of travelers. After all, we've been the source of their biggest headache until now.

Whatever, I still headed to the portal while thinking that I will kill all those blocking my way.

However... humans unexpectedly helped us.

The 'human' Wizards dispersed the incoming waves of attacks, and the 'human' Knights desperately blocked the unidentifiable creatures. In my eyes, though, they weren't resisting, simply throwing their lives away.

"What are you doing, Ellie!! Hurry and come over here!!" (TL: Not a mistranslation; mister Author changed Bathory's name, for good.)

My godfather shouted at me, while I was lost in the sight of the humans fiercely fighting out there. I couldn't think for long. I entered the portal, and escaped from the homeworld.

And so, a brand new world I've never even dreamed of seeing in my life spread out before my stunned eyes.

"Are you refugees from another world?"

Another, 'new' humans were looking at me.

But... why didn't those humans run away in panic? Why did they lend a helping hand to us?

I never understood their reasoning back then, and even now, I can't understand it.

"..."

(TL: Back to 3rd person perspective.)

Captured by the memories of the past, Bathory's mind sunk deeper and deeper into the darkness below where nothing existed.

Suddenly, a baseless confidence rose up within her.

Her homeworld must've overcome the crisis of the Fissure.

And so, it must have recovered the beautiful scenery she and her companions used to see.

The homeworld was waiting with a warm and gentle embrace for her return.

Now completely entranced, she took a step closer towards the Fissure.

"What the hell are you doing?!" (Sae-Jin)

However, someone grabbed her arm. Her blurry, unfocused eyes regained focus. Bathory glanced at Kim Sae-Jin holding her arm, and then shifted her gaze back at the Fissure. Even now, the ground below her feet was collapsing. Although still incomplete, it resembled a portal now, more or less. If she swam in those dark waves, then she might arrive back at the homeworld she'd been longing for so much.

But in that moment, a solid arm tightly and rather forcefully wrapped around her waist.

“Hey...!” (Bathory)

“Everyone, hold on!!” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin shouted out while pulling Bathory into his arms. Confirming that everyone had clung tightly onto him, he quickly transformed into the Leviathan and activated the instant transmission.



As if the sight of that Fissure stretching below their feet infinitely was nothing more than a nightmare, the team members returned to the underground conference room in an instant.

But no one spoke a single word; they were suffering from the shock of the events that happened just now.

And what the hell was that *thing* they saw?

It was as if the entire surface of the earth became a Fissure. No one had seen one that big before, ever.

“What happened back there?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin broke the heavy silence with some difficulty. She was a brave person indeed to speak up, since the person she asked and was expecting an answer from happened to be Bathory.

With complicated eyes, the Vampire queen stared at Kim Yu-Rin, before breaking out in a smirk.

“What else? That dang kid stimulated the Fissure by using my Mana, his own body, as well as the Feather of Efrit, that’s what.” (Bathory)

“What’s a Feather of Efrit?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“You know, that thing. The thing that almost killed you just now. Looking like an octopus, with tentacles and stuff.” (Bathory)

“Ah.”

Kim Yu-Rin stupidly nodded her head. Bathory shook her head as if she disapproved of the reaction, and then continued.

"That thing, is a remnant of the 'demon god' that used to live back in my homeworld. It will never disappear, unless you kill the original body it came from, and its destructive power depends on the 'grade' of Mana absorbed." (Bathory)

Bathory stopped talking for a moment, and let out a frustrated sigh.

"...But, that damn feather absorbed my Mana. So, it and the body of that damn el Las kid will be consumed as the fuel to widen up the Fissure for good. Even if things get delayed, in two days' time, everything will come to an end."

In other words, this was the worst of all possibilities. Kim Yu-Rin gritted her teeth.

"Then, what should we do now?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

"Well, you should decide. To abandon your home, and escape to another world. Or, fall together with this planet." (Bathory)

When Bathory's words ended, Kim Yu-Rin stumbled and sat down on the couch, as if some of her strength escaped.

It was then. Sae-Jin, who had been quietly listening while his gaze was fixed to the floor, raised his head.

"...There's something I'm curious about." (Sae-Jin)

Bathory glanced at Sae-Jin's direction.

"Does that Feather function as something important?" (Sae-Jin)

"...Hey, you. It's from a demonic god. A damn demon god. It's got the word 'god' in it, for crying out loud. How can you be even worse than me in language and stuff?" (Bathory)

"Whatever. So you're saying it plays a crucial role, right? Then, we still might have more time than you think." (Sae-Jin)

".....You really are a hopelessly unsalvageable idiot, aren't you?" (Bathory)

Even under the assault of Bathory's sneering eyes, Sae-Jin simply chuckled and produced an item tucked away within himself.

It was an item procured on the spur of the moment, a jet-black and surprisingly hard feather – the Feather of Efrit.

Seeing this, Bathory's eyes widened.

"But... How?" (Bathory)

"Looks like it is the correct article, then, judging by your reaction. I knew instinctively that this thing was a weakness. So, I took it." (Sae-Jin)

".....Oh well. Sure, you did something good, but it's all too late now. What you did was to delay something that was planned to happen tomorrow, for maybe two months, tops." (Bathory)

What she said was correct; no matter how positive they wanted to spin this, this one fact couldn't be denied, causing yet another weighty bout of silence to descend in the room.

And so... time continued to flow and soon, the day became night.

Sae-Jin didn't have anything to do. Didn't feel like holding another meeting, either. But, he didn't dare to go home, not just yet.

He was trying to solve the problem, but ended up exacerbating the situation even further. Was it because he was too hasty...?

As if this thought was shared among the rest of the team members, not one of them thought about leaving the conference room.

However, Bathory had disappeared a long time ago. And Sae-Jin could only feel his chest tighten further in frustration.

He lied down on the couch and closed his eyes.

He didn't mind at all if this whole situation turned out to be some sort of a bad dream. Not at all.



“...Uhm, Guild Master?”

Someone’s voice spread out like a ripple in Sae-Jin’s consciousness.

“I have something to tell you.” (Lillia)

When he opened his eyes a little, he saw Lillia. Like a mirage borne out of his fading dream, she seemed especially beautiful under the cover of darkness.

“Regarding...?” (Sae-Jin)

“For now, please come with me.” (Lillia)

Sae-Jin rubbed his eyes a bit and looked around.

“I’m sure it’s fine, since everyone’s still asleep...” (Sae-Jin)

While grumbling to himself, Sae-Jin moved towards the barrier room Hazeline used to practice, located next to the conference room. After going as far as to activate the isolation barrier, Sae-Jin yawned out loudly and stared at Lillia.

“What did you want to tell me?” (Sae-Jin)

Lillia smiled thinly.

For some reason, Sae-Jin thought that smile was incredibly gentle and warm.

“Looks like we don’t have much time left, yes? Soon, the Fissure will open up in full.” (Lillia)

“Ah, that...”

And here he was, almost forgetting it. Sae-Jin could only let out a bitter groan rising from deep within his heart.

“Wait. How did you find out?” (Sae-Jin)

He could not remember telling Lillia about what had happened.

She maintained that gentle smile and spoke some cryptic, enigmatic words to him.

“It’s going to be fine. All of us. And the planet.” (Lillia)

“.....Pardon?” (Sae-Jin)

Lillia was full of confidence. Obviously, Sae-Jin couldn’t understand.

Regardless, she relaxedly continued on with that smooth, gentle voice of hers.

“A Fissure will try to destroy a ‘world’ by inserting a gap of sorts in there. But surprisingly... because of that very gap, something that could definitely never occur without the existence of a Fissure, something with a hopelessly low percentage of succeeding, a miracle so miraculous – that very miracle is going to happen.” (Lillia)

From her inner pocket, she pulled out a worn-out notebook that seemed to have bore witness to the cruel and unrelenting passage of time. Then, she pushed it at Sae-Jin.

“Please, read this.” (Lillia)

Sae-Jin received the notebook with a confused face.

“It might break if I try to open it...” (Sae-Jin)

“It’s been treated with magic.” (Lillia)

“Oh, is that so?..... However, this thing... it seems awfully familiar.” (Sae-Jin)

Something about this book seemed really familiar to him. Sae-Jin tilted his head while flipping over to the first page. And almost right away, he understood the reason why.

The dates jotted down, the sparse details of the daily happenings, and the feelings noted within...

This was a certain someone’s diary.

“This... is...” (Sae-Jin)

The revelation was shocking. It felt like he got struck in the back of his head by the Emillejong Bell, and now the insides were ringing like crazy. In that moment, he

couldn't even breathe, let alone string a sentence together.

Lillia smiled again while looking at him.

And as if she was trying to imprint every single word in his head, she spoke carefully.

"This notebook, it's your diary. To be more specific, it's a diary written by the future version of you... Something like that." (Lillia)

".....Huh."

A wry, bitter chuckle escaped his mouth.

One could traverse through time by entering the Fissure.

He knew this already, but he honestly did not expect things to turn out quite like this.

"Please, read everything in it." (Lillia)

"For, for now, let's... Let's go somewhere else." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin did his best to rein his quaking mind and hid the diary within his inner pocket.



Sae-Jin went to a nearby hotel and after getting a room, began reading the diary. He spent the whole day reading it. There were things he was embarrassed to share with others; there were many missing dates too, as if he was too busy to write something down; and the most important part, the part about what happened after the Fissure completely broke open, was somewhat hazy and vague in detail.

"This book of prophecy, no, this diary has been our most sacred holy book, even now. Without this, we'd still be dreaming the false dream of returning to our homeworld." (Lillia)

"Okay, fine, but... Just when did, uh, 'me'...give you this?" (Sae-Jin)

"Probably, around 70 years ago. Maybe." (Lillia)

"You look considerably young for that, though?" (Sae-Jin)

“It’s only my external appearance that looks young.” (Lillia)

“Ha, haha...” (Sae-Jin)

But more importantly, 70 years – that was a long time ago. No, perhaps, it could have been even longer than that. Sae-Jin began smiling bitterly at the thought.

Lillia tightly held his hand. And with a somewhat unsure face, she spoke words that seemed a bit out of the blue.

“The earth, and us, we were fated to be saved. By Mister Sae-Jin’s hands.” (Lillia)

Her voice contained a heavy dosage of determined reverence.

“...I’m not planning to run away from this, so you don’t have to console me. It seems like it’s already set in stone, anyways. If I can save myself, the planet, all those precious to me, then it’s for the better, I guess... But, it sure doesn’t feel so good if I think about what’s to come, you know?” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin forcibly squeezed out a smile and asked a question he was really curious about.

“But, just what did this diary have to do with the Vampire Lord?” (Sae-Jin)

That thing the Lord said, the prophecy that still remained fleeting in his head – just how did this book relate to those words?

“This original book was kept within me via Spiritualisation, while I had a copy made to resemble an ‘ancient tome’, and had it stored in an underground vault. The Lord took away that copy and researched it.” (Lillia)

“...Wait a minute. Are you saying the Vampires have been researching my diary?!” (Sae-Jin)

“Fuhut. No. No, they weren’t doing that. The only one researching your diary was the Lord, no one else. The other Vampires were researching the real ancient tome we brought along from our homeworld.” (Lillia)

“Aha... I was way off the mark, wasn’t I.” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes, somewhat.” (Lillia)

The conversation tinged with slight humour only lasted for an all-too brief second, before a strange silence filled the gap.

SFX for ticking of a clock

The ticking of the second hand felt so sharp in this moment.

After looking down on the diary for a while, Sae-Jin grumbled in a voice that sounded a little dejected.

“By the way, if things unfold as this diary says, then... it might get a bit depressing. Ah, maybe the boredom should be a bigger worry than depression, instead.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Whatever happens, you’ll have to forfeit a lot of things.” (Lillia)

Lillia gazed at him with those pair of gentle eyes. Sae-Jin met her gaze.

“Perhaps, do you seek company? I’m always ready...” (Lillia)

It seemed that she mistook his gaze for something else entirely, judging by the way she began to undo the buttons of her dress...

“There’s no need. Please leave. I’d like to be alone for now.” (Sae-Jin)

“Eh? But, in your diary, we... Ah, that was a prank?!” (Lillia)

“...Fut. For now, let me be alone. Please.” (Sae-Jin)

Thanks to her, he did feel a little bit better.



When the dawn’s sun rose, Sae-Jin left the hotel. He wandered the streets aimlessly, while holding the Feather of Efrit in one hand. The demon god’s inheritance – the things that needed to be done with it were quite clear to him.

In that case, was there a reason for him to tremble in fear and hesitate?

Sae-Jin shook away all unnecessary thoughts and then, chucked the Feather into his mouth.

As it was written on the ‘diary’, many, many alert windows popped up.

However, he didn’t feel the usual joy of evolution. He also didn’t feel depressed, either. He didn’t even feel the burning sense of duty, too. No, rather unexcitingly, he just felt that this was something he simply had to do.

[Condition complete: The Wolf that kills gods, Fenrir.]

- The dormant potential sleeping within explodes forth, after ingesting the Feather of Efrit.
- However, as the quantity isn’t enough, the host can only transform into Fenrir for ‘one day’.

What the hell is a bloody Fenrir now?!

A groan automatically escaped from his mouth.

Chapter 165

Waves (3)

Sae-Jin returned to the conference room and told the gathered members to go home. He told them that he and Lillia had come up with a suitable plan of action, so they shouldn't worry too much.

Then, he sat alone in the empty conference room and switched on the TV.

The footage of everyday life shown on screen was the same as before.

Channels dedicated to all things magic busy talked about the matters related to the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong, who had published a brand new grimoire not too long ago; entertainment programmes, being aired much too early in the day it seemed, were filled with a sense of responsibility, an obligation to entertain the masses during these turbulent times; while the news channels must've decided to run counter to the entertainment channels, by only talking about serious topics over and over again.

As expected, the everyday lives remained the same.

Sae-Jin spent a bit of time looking at the TV screen with a dazed face, before leaving the room himself.

Greeted by the employees of the Guild, Sae-Jin escaped the HQ building, and drove home in his car. Although the time was just about when folks were commuting to work, the roads were sparsely populated thanks to the frequently-occurring Monster attacks. So, he got to drive at a more than acceptable speed. He even rolled his window down.

SFX for wind rushing in

Cool breeze entered the cabin.

Through the open window of the car, he could see the morning sun peeking out from under the clouds. Under that clear, bright rays of the rising sun, the river below shimmered like the polished surface of a priceless jewel.

He felt like concentrating on the scenery, so he put the car on autopilot.

The stunning, beautiful views passed by him, and the people started their daily lives.

Humans, Elves, Soo-ins, they were all starting their day.

Sae-Jin carefully studied each and every one of their faces as long as he could.



Sae-Jin came home, and found Yu Sae-Jung still deeply asleep. While carrying a thin smile, he lightly kissed her cheek. She opened her sleepy eyes and smiled brightly, before hugging him tight.

“You got an off day today?” (Sae-Jin)

“Ng~~. I was in a raid yesterday, so I got the day off today.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“A raid? It must’ve been not too long ago since you came home.” (Sae-Jin)

“Yeah, maybe a hour ago? But, it’s okay.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

It turned out, she wasn’t ‘still’ sleeping. As he was feeling apologetic, she suddenly pulled his head close and kissed him deeply in the mouth.

She seemed especially hands-on today.

There was no need for a deep discussion, then. While smiling, Sae-Jin began to slowly undress her.

And so, the two of them started their precious day together.



“.....You what?!” (Bathory)

A day after that happened.

Bathory got surprised by Sae-Jin’s unexpected visit to her place, but then, got even more dumbfounded by what he had said to her.

“Have you gone insane?” (Bathory)

“Well, it doesn’t matter to you anyways, right? It’s not like you’ll run out of blood, after all. Instead, I’ll supply you with the highest quality blood packs as compensation. Blood from Knights, no less.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin maintained a crafty smile even while under Bathory’s disgusted stare. What he asked her for was her blood.

“Do you even realise what blood means to us Vampires?” (Bathory)

“It’s important, I know that.” (Sae-Jin)

“It’s past the level of being important, since it’s used to demarcate our classes, you see? But now, you asking a Vampire for her blood, doesn’t that mean you’re planning to commit suicide by my hands?” (Bathory)

Bathory’s forehead creased up rather deeply.

“Well, it can’t be helped, then. I’ll just take it by force.” (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin growled deliberately and stared fiercely at her. However, her expressions became even more angrier, instead.

“Crazy b*stard...” (Bathory)

“Argh, just help me out here, will you. Like the boss lady you are.” (Sae-Jin)

“Just where are you planning to use my... No wait, besides that, why should I even help you out here?” (Bathory)

“Because you already helped us out?” (Sae-Jin)

“You hurt your head real bad, didn’t you?” (Bathory)

Sae-Jin chuckled and pulled out his phone.

“In return, let me give you a small present.” (Sae-Jin)

He then projected one of the stored footages as a hologram.

SFX for a chick chirping

It was a recording of a Korean crow-tit chick flying around in the air. Seeing that cute outer exterior, Bathory froze up.

“Isn’t it cute? It looks cute enough, but it’s unexpectedly strong, though.” (Sae-Jin)

“...S, so, what about it?” (Bathory)

“I’ll let you take it as your new pet. It’s got a bit of a rotten personality, but I’m sure you’ll tame it just fine.” (Sae-Jin)

It seemed Bathory got interested, but she quickly regained her senses and shook head fiercely.

“Why should I...” (Bathory)

But Sae-Jin wasn’t finished with his sales pitch.

“I hear that thing was created by the Vampire Lord.” (Sae-Jin)

He heard it from the Nosferatus that this bird was actually a Chimera carefully created by the Lord himself. Which sounded about right, since common sense dictated that a Monster wouldn’t look that cute no matter what.

And his reason for creating that thing was to give it to Bathory as a present at some stage. It seemed that the Lord was aware of Bathory’s slightly strange taste in hobbies.

Sae-Jin chose not to pass on those emotive truths to her, however.

“.....”

As if she had figured that out without him saying anything else, Bathory didn’t utter a single word. Judging by how her chin protruded out and trembled at the same time, she seemed to be fighting hard against the tide of emotions right now.

She finally opened her mouth after a lengthy bout of silence. Her voice was weak and shaky.

“...But, but, isn’t that mine already? I mean... I’m the Lord now...” (Bathory)

Sae-Jin averted his gaze in order to pretend that he didn't see the hints of tears on her facade of steady strength.

"Technically, sure. But that dang thing is really fast, so even you'll have trouble catching it. Most likely, you will end up wasting time flying around this way and that." (Sae-Jin)

"What the? So, how the heck will you catch something that even I can't?" (Bathory)

Kim Sae-Jin smirked confidently.

"There is a way." (Sae-Jin)

Bathory glared at him wordlessly. Sae-Jin nervously swallowed, feeling the tension. The suffocating time crept by. He already knew she'd say yes, yet the tension was really mounting up.

Suddenly, Bathory lowered the shoulder lace of her red dress. Her pale smooth skin got exposed to his eyes quite unexpectedly, so Sae-Jin blushed a little bit and averted his gaze once more.

"Hey, hey, hey. It's too sudden, you know..." (Sae-Jin)

"Why don't you just shut up. How much do you need?" (Bathory)



There wasn't too much time left. That was why he couldn't afford to waste one single day.

So, the day after he got Bathory's permission, Sae-Jin called for a regular Guild Members Conference to be held. Scheduled for the 17th every month, its purpose was to let the Guild members gather together and foster friendship and camaraderie.

The very first person he ran into was Kim Yu-Rin, known for her strict policy of arriving before the promised time. As a matter of fact, she arrived almost one hour early – but her complexion wasn't so good.

More than likely, many worries and fears were tumbling around within her mind.

He took her to a five-star restaurant that even the self-proclaimed epicurean like

himself found utterly beyond reproach.

Less than ten minutes ago, she protested that she had no appetite whatsoever, but as soon as a juicy slab of steak was placed in front, she began chugging it down her throat. Sae-Jin found it quite humorous, seeing her looking depressed while busy shoving the delectable meat into her mouth.

“Is it good?” (Sae-Jin)

“Yes...” (Kim Yu-Rin)

While he studied her interestedly, another member arrived. This time, it was Hazeline. Her complexion was just as poor, but when she discovered both Sae-Jin and Kim Yu-Rin, some colour did return.

Hazeline hesitated by the end of the table, wondering whether to sit next to Sae-Jin, or next to Kim Yu-Rin.

But then, Yu Baek-Song entered the venue, let off a short exclamation, and dived into the open seat right next to Sae-Jin’s. Hazeline had also chosen the seat next to Sae-Jin with great difficulty by then, so she got flustered by this sudden intrusion and hurriedly grabbed the back of Yu Baek-Song’s neck.

“Hey, you!! Get out of there!!” (Hazeline)

“Where the hell do you think you are grabbing right now?!” (Yu Baek-Song)

Too bad, there was no way Hazeline could win in the physical battle, so the situation got reversed in a heartbeat.

“Let, let go!! Let me go when I’m still being nice!!” (Hazeline)

Hazeline cried out in alarm. Well, she was locked into a painful-looking headlock, after all.

“Why doncha try being not nice, then?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“Ah, arh, ahh!! That hurts!!” (Hazeline)

Sae-Jin looked at them and chuckled ever so slightly.

"Hahaha... The seat next to me is reserved for someone else, though." (Sae-Jin)

"Huh?"

"Today's a gathering of all the Guild members, remember? Sae-Jung should be arriving very soon." (Sae-Jin)

Only then, Yu Baek-Song released the headlock and changed her seat to the one near the empty seat next to Sae-Jin's.

"Others haven't arrived yet? New Guild members will attend this thing, right?" (Yu Baek-Song)

"They should be arriving soon as well. Ah, here they come." (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sun-Ho arrived, along with Rhosrahdel in tow.

Not long after that, two new male members Joo Oh-Hyung and Bretin entered the venue, completely stiff from the nervousness.

““It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintances!!””

After the duo's energetic greetings came to an end, Joo Ji-Hyuk and Yi Hye-Rin showed up together next.

With their arms entwined in the open for all to see, it seemed that their relationship had moved onto a more favourable stage. Was this the case of 'danger' being the best matchmaker there ever was?

"We're here now, everyone~." (Yi Hye-Rin)

“.....H, hmm.” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

Yi Hye-Rin, pretending to be outgoing and bright, and Joo Ji-Hyuk, fake coughing to clear his throat while his expressions looking somewhat complicated – the two of them sat down next to each other.

Yu Sae-Jung entered the restaurant soon afterwards.

"I got delayed while parking the car~. Really now, Knight Joo Ji-Hyuk, how come you

don't have the driving licence yet? Also, Miss Hye-Rin, too?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Haha... I, uh, I only have a licence for riding Griffins." (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

Joo Ji-Hyuk came up with an excuse while scratching the back of his head. Yu Sae-Jung smiled brightly and sat down next to Sae-Jin.

"Oppa~." (Yu Baek-Song)

And then, openly hugged him tightly for everyone to see.

Kim Yu-Rin took a glance at Hazeline's direction. Hazeline too glanced at Kim Yu-Rin. Their gazes met each other's in the middle. Hazeline's body shuddered involuntarily, before she formed a smile that said she's okay, and then, leaned her head against Kim Yu-Rin's shoulder.

"...So, is this everyone?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin asked while slowly pushing Hazeline's head off her shoulder.

"No, not yet. There is one more person still to come." (Sae-Jin)

"One more?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin looked around the table. However, no matter how much she looked, everyone seemed to be here.

Then, she remembered one more face. But, that woman was...

"Can't be." (Kim Yu-Rin)

With an excellent timing, the sharp sounds of high heels could be heard.

The front entrance to the restaurant opened in a rather eerie manner, and the unlikely protagonist for today's get-together had finally showed herself.

Ellie von Bathory.

The queen of the Vampires.

"Uh-hurk!"

At her sudden intrusion, everyone panicked, with the only exception being Yu Sae-Jung and her tilting head, who had no clue on Bathory's true identity.

Meanwhile, Bathory walked up to the table in no time and took a seat right next to Yu Baek-Song. Seeing Yu Baek-Song stiffen up completely, it was as if she was no longer a divine White Tiger, but a mere domesticated white cat, instead.

".....And why are you all staring at me for? I'm also a Guild member, too. Are you dissatisfied by that?" (Bathory)

Bathory pointedly asked Joo Ji-Hyuk, who had been sitting in his seat with an unhappy expression while staring at the leader of the Vampires. As soon as he got asked, he violently shook his head and averted his gaze towards the table.

"Well, then. Everyone, let's not be so stiff here. We gathered today in order to foster friendship and understanding among the members, so let us enjoy ourselves." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin clapped his hands in order to liven up the atmosphere. At the same time, countless waiters appeared and carried many delicacies and drinks to the table. All of them were luxurious, top-of-the-line stuff that truly showcased the meaning of having a 'feast'.

But, well, Bathory didn't really care for how wonderful the feast laid out before her eyes was.

Of course, that was only until a plate topped off with a pair of energy bars was placed in front of her.

"What the. Hey, you wish to kill yourself today?" (Bathory)

Bathory narrowed her eyes and glared at the waiter that brought this plate. However, as if he had received the prior 'education', this waiter rapidly evacuated from the spot.

"Hey! Bring me that b*stard over here!" (Bathory)

As if she got a bit ticked off, Bathory cracked her neck muscles and beckoned with her finger. Sae-Jin quickly pacified her.

“Don’t be like that, and have a bite.” (Sae-Jin)

“And why should I bite crap like this?!” (Bathory)

Instead of calming down, though, she shouted out in an even louder voice, which served to freeze the atmosphere of the meeting completely.

“Hmm...”

Sae-Jin wordlessly tapped the table.

“Take a bite first and see. It’s wine flavoured, so I think you might be less resistant to it.” (Sae-Jin)

Bathory shuddered a bit when she heard him.

Wine. The alcoholic drink that humans drank regularly, but something she could never enjoy. Back in her homeworld, drinking good wine was a popular pastime. Even back then, her young mind often wondered how good it could be, since a bottle of certain wine could buy a whole village. Just how tasty could it be?

“.....”

Bathory surveyed her surroundings. Guild members who were silently staring at her hurriedly dug into their food as soon as her gazes swept past them. Heck, they even forcibly commenced with conversations among themselves. They still stole quick glances at her, though, as if to signal their mounting curiosity to find out whether she’d take a bite off the energy bar or not.

And so, another ten minutes went by.

Making sure no one was looking at her, Bathory stealthily picked up one of the bars, and peeled it using Mana to erase all sounds. And then, she glanced around one more time to make sure no one was looking.

And indeed, no one had noticed.

Now was the time!!

She swallowed the energy bar whole.

And at that moment, her eyes shot right open.

The faint aroma of grapes that seemed to arrest every pore of her body caused her face to blush, and her spine spasmed violently.

It completely, utterly suited her preference.

“Uh-heuph...”

She quickly blocked her mouth from uttering out the gasps of pleasure. Thank heavens, no one noticed her small incident even now.

...With a clear exception of one b*stard, that was.

“Heheh.”

Bathory felt like pouring all her strength into wiping that oily smirk off Sae-Jin's grinning face. Even if it was for just once.

Chapter 166

The Wait (1)

Fallen leaves and naked trees; warmer coats and cooler temperatures. In a few areas of Gangwon Province, where the changes in seasons were especially prominent, thin snowflakes were falling here and there – it was that kind of a day.

The middle of November existed in limbo, stuck between the end of Autumn and the beginning of Winter.

Not wanting to waste precious time, Sae-Jin focused every fibre of his being on various business ventures under his control.

Firstly, his company constructed an artificial island the size of Yeouido off the Gangwon's coastline for the East Sea, and the nesting area for Griffins was built there. He also spent half of each day on crafting various artifacts and armaments as well as writing grimoires. Of course, that meant he didn't get to enjoy the luxury of sleep at all during this time. (*TL: Yeouido might sound like a fakey tongue-twister, but it's an actual island in the middle of Han River flowing through Seoul. Think of it as Manhattan and you're almost there.*)

He also actively participated on the matters of foreign affair as well.

He met and held talks with local and overseas politicians, Presidents, and Prime Ministers. And he assured them that the humanity would definitely overcome the current crisis, so they must never give up hope and endure for a little bit longer.

Some people accused him of preaching baseless hope to the masses, but Sae-Jin ignored them and did not stop his work.

Cooperating with the government, he was able to restrict access to the home base of the el Las clan where the Fissure had opened up.

The estimated size of the Fissure was around 1000 *pyoung*. Considering that the Fissure in Africa that caused the history's biggest catastrophe was only around 20 *pyoung*, the new one's size was enough to instill an unprecedented amount of despair

on all who saw it.

The survey team comprised of The Monster's staff and government employees fell into a deep state of panic, once they clapped their eyes on the actual Fissure. If it wasn't for Rhosrahdel's mind control magic 'decreasing' the size of the Fissure to 1/100 in the survey team's minds, then the whole world might have fallen into an even greater chaos right then.

And before long, as he spent every single day busy as a bee, the 'deadline' drew in ever closer, now only one month away.

"There it is." (Sae-Jin)

And today.

Just as it was written on his diary, Sae-Jin came to a coastline near Yeongdo located in Busan. And in between the distant white, fluffy clouds, he could see the blurry shape of that Korean crow-tit chick. (*TL: It's an island off the south coast of the city of Busan.*)

Bathory followed Sae-Jin's pointing fingers and took a very long look at the bird-like Monster. She was more than satisfied by the adorable exterior of the creature.

"...It's bigger than I expected." (Bathory)

"What, you don't like it?" (Sae-Jin)

"Nope." (Bathory)

After spitting out a short reply, Bathory extended out her Mana towards the Monster. Sae-Jin expected the creature to fiercely rebel against them, but to his surprise, it chased after the Mana's trail and descended. Heck, it even nasally chirped *ppiyack, ppiyack*, too.

Sae-Jin broke out in a hollow chuckle – did the dang thing recognise its destined master or something?

When the bird Monster got close enough, Bathory reached out her hand. The creature was busy smiling as it approached, but then, spotted Sae-Jin next to her and became very cautious for a minute. Eventually, though, it crept up closer and settled quietly down on Bathory's arm – like some dang pirate's parrot or something.

“Would you look at that.” (Sae-Jin)

Finally, Sae-Jin got to take a detailed look at the bird Monster.

A small protruding beak, the wide and flat-ish face, and a pair of round and clear eyes that nicely shone in contrast to that face. But what caught his attention the most were faint letters visible on where the wing met the shoulder. It was neither English nor Korean.

But Sae-Jin could more or less tell the meaning of those letters.

“That’s my name. Ellie von Bathory.”

As if she had realised the true meaning of it, Bathory murmured with a complicated emotion. Her voice contained a faint trace of sadness. Sae-Jin didn’t have anything particularly important to say, so he said whatever.

“It’s a pretty name.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Shut up.” (Bathory)

It seemed that he shouldn’t have said anything. When Bathory took a glance at him...

“Ppeheck!!”

The bird Monster, that had been busy rubbing its body on Bathory’s arm until now, suddenly spat out a Breath of flames at Sae-Jin’s face.

It was as if it would not tolerate a human being annoying its master. Sae-Jin’s blackened face crumpled unsightly.

“Fuhut, well done, my Choucream.” (TL: This is a Konglish word describing a certain type of custard. Google it if you’re curious. 쥐크림)

She had named it already. Sae-Jin grinned thinly and extended his hand towards the Monster.

“Hand it over. Let me hit it just once.” (Sae-Jin)

“Get lost.” (Bathory)

Bathory mockingly laughed as if he got what he deserved, and then, used instant transmission along with the bird Monster. Suddenly left all alone, Sae-Jin wiped the ashes off his face and searched after her Mana signature.

Well, there was a little bit of blood he needed to receive from her still.



December first.

“.....”

“.....”

“.....”

Kim Yu-Rin, Sae-Jin, Hazeline, Yu Sae-Jung, and Yu Baek-Song were staring at the rectangular card resting on top of the conference table and were thinking very deeply.

Just what was this card supposed to be...?

“It’s my wedding invitation~.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin solved all their questions with a cheerful voice.

The five people’s heads shot right up.

“So suddenly?”

“...We don’t know what’s going to happen in the future, so I should get married before something does happen, right?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Unlike her smiling face, her words spoke of a rather depressing future possibility.

“Does Mister Ji-Hyuk... know he’s getting married to you?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

Sae-Jin couldn’t help but chuckle at Kim Yu-Rin’s cautious inquiry. If the husband-to-be wasn’t aware of the wedding, then that would be a wonderful comedy in itself.

Yi Hye-Rin frowned slightly and nodded her head.

"Of course. If we count us flirting around as us dating, then we've been going out for over a year already." (Yi Hye-Rin)

Indeed, they did flirt pretty hardcore until now.

"Well, yeah. Mister Joo Ji-Hyuk is a good man, so I am not too concerned, but..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin became suspicious ever so slightly. Seeing that a wedding had been set way before the participants were 'known' to be in love, she couldn't help but wonder if there was some kind of an *accident* at play here.

As if she was unable to see why suspicions might rise – or, simply not caring – Yi Hye-Rin grinned refreshingly and surveyed the faces of everyone, before playfully yammering on.

"Oh yeah, by the way – Captain, just when did you sneak to our Guild Master's side? Even the first 'madam' is present here and all, so like, wowsers." (Yi Hye-Rin)

"Ah, now that you mention it, you're right. Let's swap places." (Yu Sae-Jung)

At the same time, the deeply troubled Yu Sae-Jung shot up from her seat.

"Ahaha... Sorry, sorry." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin scratched the back of her neck and vacated the seat, and Yu Sae-Jung rapidly occupied the resulting empty spot.

"For the role of the marriage officiant, the Raven Order Master has agreed to fill in, and I also got the word that Guild Master will sing the congratulatory song." (Yi Hye-Rin)

"...Hang on. I'm singing at your wedding reception?" (Sae-Jin)

"Yep." (Yi Hye-Rin)

"But, I can't sing, though? No, wait. You've never even asked me about this until now, so... how?" (Sae-Jin)

He couldn't remember ever agreeing to sing – not even in his dreams did he agree to do such a thing. When Sae-Jin became flustered, Yi Hye-Rin also became somewhat

confused as well.

"But, I got the permission from Sae-Jung? Back when we went out for a night out, just couple of us Knights." (Yi Hye-Rin)

Sae-Jin glared at Yu Sae-Jung with eyes demanding explanations. She evaded his pointed stares and whispered in a low, low voice.

"I forgot to mention it to you..." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"E, eh?! But, but! You're already so famous for your dreamy voice, Guild Master! That's why I definitely believe you'll sing beautifully, really!! And I even boasted to others you'd be singing at the ceremony..." (Yi Hye-Rin)

Sae-Jin couldn't bring himself to say no to Yi Hye-Rin's desperately pleading eyes. Still, he needed to punish Yu Sae-Jung appropriately.

"Okay, I understand. I will do it. But... Miss Yu-Rin, I think you should change your seat again." (Sae-Jin)

"Ah!! No, you can't! I'm sorry, Oppa!" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Change the seat." (Sae-Jin)

".....Euh euh." (Yu Sae-Jung)

And so, Yu Sae-Jung was unceremoniously demoted. But, not too long afterwards, even Kim Yu-Rin lost her spot to Hazeline after she was found to be lusting after... Sae-Jin's portion of snacks.

Yi Hye-Rin couldn't help but laugh out loudly while watching these four people.

"*SFX for a loud guffaw*"

It would be wonderful if she could spend the rest of her life this happy.

Yi Hye-Rin thought of this small but luxurious dream.



[The Monster Guild member and a top celeb, Yi Hye-Rin announces shock wedding ceremony. The husband to be is...]

Soon afterwards, news broke out simultaneously all over the media. As expected, Yi Hye-Rin's popularity and the reach of her influence were great enough for her story to dominate not only the entertainment sections, but even the society pages as well.

And on the following day the news broke, the wedding ceremony took place.

The venue was the front lawn of the Guild HQ building.

Nominally, it was a 'small-scale', closed-door wedding ceremony, but the identities of those attending it were enough to cause gasps of shock – from the likes of the Raven Order Master, to the country's Prime Minister, who should be too busy with work to attend a wedding, and even CEO of TM, Jo Hahn-Sung, etc, etc...

And in this place where real heavyweights had gathered, Sae-Jin had to sing in public. The name of the chosen song was "You In My Arms". It was rather funny seeing his reddened face while he sang, but thanks to his rather suave voice, the venue soon got into the groove of the song. The whole atmosphere here was quite romantic and hopeful.

The wedding eventually ended in a gentle, tranquil mood.

"And we're going now~."

After saying their farewells to the gathered Guild members and the family from both sides, Joo Ji-Hyuk and Yi Hye-Rin went off to their honeymoon.

Actually, although it was nominally a honeymoon, it was nothing more than the married couple taking three days off and resting at Yi Hye-Rin's personal residence. As an aside, Yi Hye-Rin's home was a \$38 million mansion located in the top suburb of Seoul. The imposing size and the impressive majesty of it were more than enough to shock Joo Ji-Hyuk quite thoroughly.

At the same time, Sae-Jin decided to travel along with Yu Sae-Jung, who also got some time off as well. Because of the current state of the world, they couldn't go too far, so they just went to a small villa on the coast, to have some private fun.

The plan was for just the two of them to go and hide away for a while. Yet...

"Weren't we supposed to go alone? Like, just us two?"

Unfortunately, several hangers-on decided to pop in and ruin that plan – Rhosrahdel, Kim Sun-Ho, Hazeline, even Yu Baek-Song. It was a mystery how they found out, but they still showed up carrying their luggage.

"Yeah, me too. I was thinking the same..." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin replied to Yu Sae-Jung while sweating heavily. Hazeline quickly figured out the couple's unhappy moods, and told them not to worry.

"It's just that our direction's the same. Our purposes are completely different, you know. Don't you think we should also enjoy potentially the last vacation in our lives, too?" (Hazeline)

If so, why were they shoving their bags into Sae-Jin's car? He was so dumbfounded, a hollow chuckle threatened to break out from his mouth.

"Let's go~!" (Yu Baek-Song)

Yu Baek-Song had climbed into the car before anyone noticed her, and shouted out loudly.

And so, Sae-Jin went off on a vacation with them, unable to do anything.



Yu Sae-Jung and Sae-Jin set up camp in the holiday villa, while the rest rented out a pension in its entirety for themselves. (*TL: a pension is a small hotel or a boarding house usually found in France, not just a regular payment system by a government to retirees.*)

This area was a famous vacation spot known for its scenic mountains and valleys, but, thanks to the current state of affairs, not one person was vacationing here.

Sae-Jin's group enjoyed the sights of the valley, now totally devoid of people – the incident of Hazeline nearly drowning because of Yu Baek-Song's prank notwithstanding.

Next, they held a BBQ, and in the evening, a campfire. The group had fun together.

In the beginning, Yu Sae-Jung was full of dissatisfaction, her shoulders drooping noticeably, but by the time they settled around the campfire, she was carrying around genuinely-happy expressions and told them it was “much more fun with everyone together.”

“See you guys tomorrow~.”

After saying simple goodbyes, the group split into two.

As soon as Sae-Jin and Yu Sae-Jung returned to the villa, they took a shower together. Well, rather than together, it was more like Sae-Jin barging in while Yu Sae-Jung was in the middle of a shower, actually.

“Oppa, I’m tired... T, tired...”

Maybe she had used up too much energy in the bathroom – Sae-Jung was just about to fall into a deep slumber when she hit the bed.

Sae-Jin gave his best shot at first, but he soon gave up rousing her and had to be satisfied only with tightly embracing her.

Cool breezes sneaked in through the open windows, and the trees of the forest sang sorrowfully.

An unknown amount of time went by.

“Sae-Jung-ah.”

Sae-Jin softly whispered into the ears of steadily-breathing Yu Sae-Jung.

“.....Ng?”

Her voice was deeply drowsy.

He met his gaze with hers, and spoke with a serious voice.

“Let’s get married.” (Sae-Jin)

The lull of sleep left her in that moment, and Yu Sae-Jung's eyes widened in surprise.

"But... just a little bit later." (Sae-Jin)

Then, her eyes narrowed in dissatisfaction this time. She pouted heavily and asked him.

"Why?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"I must go on a lengthy business trip to a faraway place, you see. When I return, I'll explain everything." (Sae-Jin)

Yu Sae-Jung maintained silence for a long time. It was hard to read her expressions in this moonless night. However, the smile she formed after the long bout of silence was exceptionally bright and clear.

"How long will you go away for this time?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Not sure. I think..... it might take a while." (Sae-Jin)

"...And, if I wait for you?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

Sae-Jin chuckled slightly.

"I'll give you the rest of my life." (Sae-Jin)

"Euh-heuk. I'm gonna curl up here." (Yu Sae-Jung)

She playfully frowned deeply, but then, gifted him a long kiss right away. And he decided to accept this kiss as a sign from her agreeing to his conditions.

However...

Khoong-

Their gradually-heating up atmosphere got rudely interrupted by a strange tremor.

It wasn't a big one, but also, quite a bit unsettling to simply ignore.

Perhaps overcome with ominous feelings, Yu Sae-Jung's eyes snapped open and she

tried to leave the bed – but, Sae-Jin stopped her.

“Oppa, just now...” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“It’s okay. It’ll be fine. So, just spend the night with me, here.” (Sae-Jin)

The tremor was simply caused by the ground collapsing slightly after the Fissure opened up more than usual. There were still around two weeks to go. So...

“...You don’t have to worry. I’ll take care of everything.” (Sae-Jin)

Chapter 167

The Wait (2)

Sae-Jin and Yu Sae-Jung laid back down on the bed again. And then, while using each other's body as blankets, they tried to invite back the goddess of slumber.

The whispers of nature tickled their ears.

If time flowed by quietly like this, then surely, sleep would wash over them sooner rather than later.

Unfortunately, they overlooked one little thing – they hadn't come to this vacation by themselves.

The distance between the pension where the rest of the group were staying and the countryside villa was less than 15 minutes, and well, they ran to the villa and pounded on the front door like crazy.

"Sae-Jung!! Mister Sae-Jin!!"

"There must be something big happening right now!!"

"There was a strange tremor just now..."

"Hey, stop pushing, will you?!"

Several voices were chaotically mixed up, and ended up sounding like screams, or maybe bizarre roars of wild beasts. So, the couple had no choice but to exit the villa.

As soon as the front door was opened, five totally freaked out faces, on the verge of unconsciousness, even, greeted them. Sae-Jin tried to pacify them by saying there was nothing to worry about, but no one would relax simply because he told them to.

In the end, Sae-Jin told them to enter the villa, asked them to have a sit on the floor, and then, called a certain person waiting near the Fissure's location via phone – Lillia.

“So, how does the situation look right now?” (Sae-Jin)

– “*The ground sank just a bit more.*” (Lillia)

“What about Monsters? Has any come out?” (Sae-Jin)

– “*No, but there should be still some time left before Monsters do show up.*” (Lillia)

“In other words, it’s nothing major, right?” (Sae-Jin)

– “..... *Yes, It’s nothing big.*” (Lillia)

“Thank you very much.” (Sae-Jin)

Hanging up the phone, Sae-Jin shrugged his shoulders.

“See? She says there’s nothing to worry about.” (Sae-Jin)

However, the various dumbstruck expressions on the group were something else to behold.

“What the, Mister Sae-Jin?! Just what is ‘nothing to worry about’ here?!”

“Shouldn’t we return right away?”

“I just got a call from the President, you know.”

“Wait a minute, who was that woman on the phone? Why does she sound so affectionate towards you?”

These words were spoken by Hazeline, Kim Sun-Ho, Yu Baek-Song, and Yu Sae-Jung, in that order.

“It’s alright, everyone. It is really nothing to worry about.” (Sae-Jin)

“Hey, I said, who is that woman on the phone just now?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Sae-Jin looked at Yu Sae-Jung and her very serious expression, and let out a gentle chuckle.

Hey, you, that's not the most important issue here, you know.

"She's a person who will become a Guild member pretty soon." (Sae-Jin)

"Really? How come I don't know who she is, then?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"I'll introduce her later." (Sae-Jin)

".....Hmph." (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung's eyes narrowed to a slit, full of suspicion. Hazeline glanced at the two, and shouted out in an urgent voice.

"Come on now, that's not the real problem here, Sae-Jung-ah!!"

In the end, the situation reverted back to chaos once more and Sae-Jin had no choice but to board the car heading back home.



The group arrived at the Fissure's location and confirmed the details with their own two eyes. Just as Lillia had explained, the ground surrounding the Fissure had simply collapsed just a tad, and nothing as worrisome as powerful, unknown demonic creatures popping out happened. Which meant, there was nothing for them to do here, and so, the group went their separate ways, their minds full of nervous worries and fears.

Two days later, Yi Hye-Rin and Joo Ji-Hyuk returned from their honeymoon break. As soon as they returned, they jumped straight back into being Knights.

Almost at the same time, the sect master of Jin Mudo, Yi Yu-Jin returned to Korea after finishing up the training of junior disciples overseas. As if to welcome her arrival, small and big Fissures began to spring up just about everywhere from that day onwards.

One appeared in the middle of a city, one on the coastline, sometimes even in the middle of the sky – over 100 sightings of new Fissures occurred every day.

Also, strange, dark-red mucous liquid oozed out from the underground Fissure that would later form the portal.

Thankfully, contrary to Bathory's fears, there was not one trace of unidentifiable creatures mixed among that disgusting liquid.

"Looks like there's still some time left, then." (Bathory)

While gritting her teeth, Bathory burned away every drop of that mucous liquid filling up the underground space.

Sae-Jin studied her for a bit, before a smile formed on his lips. Because, he spotted small, faint crumbs of energy bar lightly coating the corners of her mouth. He heard that she'd been ordering Rhosrahdel around to procure and consume six energy bars of varying flavours every day.

Well, how would she react once she became a bit obese later on?

"You are going to get overweight, you know." (Sae-Jin)

"What? What bullsh*t are you spewing now?" (Bathory)

"...Nothing. Never mind." (Sae-Jin)

He shook his head and asked her instead.

"That's that, but, what will you do?" (Sae-Jin)

"About what?" (Bathory)

Bathory frowned slightly.

Sae-Jin's brows danced slightly as he spoke to her in an intimate voice.

"I would love it if you remained here, in this world. When I go *there*, without a doubt, your help will be greatly needed in stopping the Monster waves. You being here makes me feel quite secure and confident, you know? Hell, you alone should be more than enough to take on the workload of 7 billion people." (Sae-Jin)

"....."

Bathory didn't say a word. He thought that was the silent refusal, but as it turned out, he was wrong.

Her voice belatedly leaked out, and well, the emotion of fear was weighing down greatly.

“Even I can’t do it.” (Bathory)

“What? Why?” (Sae-Jin)

“...There won’t be an end to Monsters coming out of the portal, that’s why.” (Bathory)

“That won’t be a problem. I’m going to close it.” (Sae-Jin)

When he replied to her and smiled brightly, Bathory’s expression crumpled all of a sudden and she shouted at him.

“Stop messing with me, you stupid f*cking c*nt idiot!!!” (Bathory)

“.....And just where did you learn to speak like that?” (Sae-Jin)

“Doesn’t matter where I learned it. You, you think you’re a god or something? From the word go, it’s completely impossible to close a portal that has been fully opened up. And then, let’s not forget, Monsters pouring out from the said portal is on a whole new level of nastiness altogether! Those filthy, disgusting sons of b*tches have destroyed countless worlds until now, and even I can’t win against them! If that portal remained open for one second, it’ll be the end. The end, you hear me?” (Bathory)

As soon as she finished shouting, her expressions darkened as if she recalled the events of the past.

He studied her for a minute or two, before walking towards the Fissure.

“Hey, hey!! W, where do you think you’re going now?!?” (Bathory)

The scared voice of Bathory came from behind him, but he ignored that for the moment and walked towards the border between the Fissure and the ground. He then peered into the darkness below.

Inside that deep, endless darkness, those b*stards were waiting. The mysterious, unknown b*stards, sometimes referred to as the devourer of worlds, or dimensions. He could clearly hear their violent, ominous pulsing with his ears of the wolf.

'Will I be able to do it?'

The wolf of Apocalypse, with its giant jaws touching the heavens and the earth below, devouring even the lands of the godly beings – that was Fenrir.

Inferring from the legendary tale, what he had to do couldn't have been any clearer even if he tried.

He had to jump in, wade inside that portal, and then – swallow whole the origin of this Fissure.

Of course, he was scared.

Also, there were several question marks that hadn't been answered yet.

It was a definite fact that the Sae-Jin from the diary, the future version of him, had indeed traveled to the past. However – did the world survive? And, just where was the future version of himself right now? Details of the events that happened after the jump to the past weren't recorded properly, so it was only natural he was full of questions. Was it because the future him gave the diary away to Lillia?

Suddenly, he thought about his parents. On the basis of the Nosferatus' faith, they also ended up trusting their yet-to-be born son.

A thin smile broke out on his lips, wondering whether it was the chicken or the egg that came first.

In the end, though – that didn't matter. Far more importantly, right now, he was finally 'connected' to his parents.

He spoke up with groundless confidence.

"I am going to succeed." (Sae-Jin)

"What?"

Bathory's voice was coming from somewhere surprisingly close. Also, he sensed that his sleeves were being held, too. Overcome with curiosity ever so slightly, Sae-Jin turned around to see what was what, and found Bathory trying to reel him back in, her body trembling in fear.

When he looked at her, a sneaky desire to pull a prank suddenly reared its head.

“*SFX for a loud, scary roar*”

“K, keuahahrk!!”

She fell back on her butt, completely shocked silly out of her mind. Her reaction was far greater than he expected. He chuckled and extended his hand to her, but then, with a loud *slap!!* she lit up his cheek.

“You rotten son of a b*tch!!” (Bathory)

“.....Ha, haha... I’m sorry.” (Sae-Jin)

Bathory snorted out figurative flames out of her nostrils while standing up. She then stomped angrily while walking away, but Sae-Jin grabbed her wrist and stopped her.

“Hey, before you go, give me an answer. Will you help me or not?” (Sae-Jin)

“Ei, you crazy idiot trash. You really think your hair-brained plan will really work?!” (Bathory)

He replied to her matter of factly.

“It will, with your help.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Hmph.”

Bathory didn’t say anything, other than a short snort, as she turned around to leave. But there was not one trace of deception, lies, or anger in her movements. In other words, he could take that as her saying yes.

With that, his mind became a lot more relaxed now.

Left alone, he checked the situation once more.

Four days remained until the end of the ‘deadline’. Strange phenomena were happening all around the world already – ominous signs such as the ground turning jet black occurred everywhere. People were afraid; everyday, protesters were marching violently, demanding the truth.

Sae-Jin ruminated on what he had to do inside this portal.

If he was brutally honest, then, rather than the obligation from the thoughts of 'I must do this in order to save the world' filling him up, it was instead the instinctive fear slowly overtaking everything, as the date loomed ever so closer.

Whenever he thought about the day in question, his heart pounded madly and even tears formed on the corners of his eyes. He dreamed nightmares throughout the night, and woke up drenched in cold perspiration.

This was probably the results born out of his self-doubt.

Could he really do it? If he had no Trait, then he would be an orphan who would've died as an orphan – a life even worse than an unremarkable one.

So, could someone like him really succeed? Such doubts and worries plagued him every single night.

If so, could he have lived a normal, boring life if no Trait manifested in him?

...If he thought about it, that wasn't possible. From the very beginning, a normal life was an impossible dream since his father was a 'Mah-in', and more importantly, he would've lived and died a worthless life where he'd have never met any of the precious people surrounding him now.

Such a life was completely worthless compared to the one he was living right now.

Right. He had no choice. In order to protect this happiness, he had no choice but to do it.

He wasn't doing it for the grand ideal of saving the world, but for the very personal and perhaps, even selfish reason of wanting to remain happy with his circle of precious friends and family.

That was all he needed.

So, he calmed his mind and took another peek into the darkness, wanting to see where he should bravely jump into, in order to make it back to the people he loved and cared about.



It was a lucky coincidence that the day before the portal would open up completely, was the date for the second scheduled get-together for the Guild members. This time, even Yi Yu-Jin made it, after she missed the first one because of her trip to overseas at the time.

But, there wasn't much to talk about. No, rather than nothing to talk about, not one conversation happened between the members, instead.

Yu Sae-Jung was neck-deep in complicated thoughts; Hazeline was quietly sobbing away while leaning on Kim Yu-Rin's shoulders. Even the usually easy-going Yi Hye-Rin was seeking Joo Ji-Hyuk's arms to cry her heart out...

"Uh-whew, you hopeless fools. Seriously now." (Bathory)

Only Bathory remained 'brave', as she glared at everyone with a dissatisfied expression on her face.

Within this depressing atmosphere, Sae-Jin finally willed himself to open his mouth.

"Everyone, I am going on a... business trip, soon." (Sae-Jin)

Suddenly, thick silence descended and all gazes focused on him. Yu Sae-Jung was doing her absolute best not to cry, while every Guild member, such as Hazeline, Kim Sun-Ho, etc, were staring at him with dumbfounded eyes.

".....Pardon? You're going off to war?" (Hazeline) (*TL: The Korean words for "business trip" and "joining the army/going to war" have a single spelling difference. Hence this rather... weak humour from the author...*)

Startled, Hazeline hurriedly stood up from her seat.

"No, a business trip. I'm going on a trip. It shouldn't be as dangerous as going to a war, though." (Sae-Jin)

"B, but, that doesn't even make sense, right? I mean, under the current state of the world, just what kind of a business trip....." (Kim Yu-Rin)

At Kim Yu-Rin's query, Sae-Jin fell into a dilemma.

Should he tell them the truth? If so, then how should he break it to them? If he decides on how, then how far should he tell them?

But wasn't that all too much work?

Besides, his work was pretty easy. Technically speaking, of course.

A simple affair, where he'd definitely come back alive, and meet up with everyone sooner or later. And that would be the end.

So, he decided to gloss over it.

Besides, either Bathory or Lillia would explain everything later, anyways.

"Well, that... You can hear it from either Miss Lillia, or from 'our' Miss Bathory over here later on." (Sae-Jin)

"Why are you mentioning me, all of a sudden?" (Bathory)

"What? What did you say just now, Oppa? Our? Why is this woman suddenly 'our' Bathory?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

Bathory glared sharply. And at the same time, Yu Sae-Jung's eyes gleamed dangerously after hearing the word 'our'. Coincidentally, their sharp, deadly eyes collided mid air.

The obvious loser from that exchange was Yu Sae-Jung. As soon as their eyes met, she lowered her tail real fast.

"No, wait. You should still give us a proper explanation. What kind of a business it is, how long you'll take, and what should we do in the meantime..." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Kim Yu-Rin asked him with a serious face. Hazeline next to her nodded her head incessantly with a pair of extra large eyes.

"Really, it's nothing much. And, it won't take too long, either..... Probably." (Sae-Jin)

From their perspective, most likely, 'it' wouldn't take long at all. Even if that wasn't the case, Sae-Jin dearly hoped that that would be the case.

"Besides, you know very well what you must do, anyways. Performing the duties of a

Knight, that's what. Ah, that's right. I almost forgot – is the distribution of artifacts and armaments complete?" (Sae-Jin)

The Monster had opened up the vault for the artifacts and the Orc Blacksmith's weapons, and distributed every single item to every Knight under the sun, with a pretext of renting them out 'unconditionally until the end of the current crisis'.

"...Yes. Everyone is apparently confused whether to feel elated or be saddened." (Kim Yu-Rin)

"Well, that's fine. For now, let's go home early, since we don't know what new things might happen tomorrow." (Sae-Jin)

Kim Sae-Jin spoke up to here, and an unusually bright smile formed on his face.

"Well, everyone. I'll see you guys at the next scheduled get-together, okay?" (Sae-Jin)

Chapter 168

The Wait (3)

“One month? Or will it be two months?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

It’s the night before. Sae-Jung was asking me, while fidgeting within my arms. But I could not be sure how long it might take, so I was unable to answer her with anything concrete.

“Then, maybe three months?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Sae-Jung’s voice was getting progressively smaller.

“.....Maybe.” (Sae-Jin)

“...Four months?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

She was whispering now. I did my best to form a believable smile, and lightly kissed her forehead.

“I will come back as soon as I can. Hell, I might even show up tomorrow, as if nothing has happened at all.” (Sae-Jin)

“Liar.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“No, really.” (Sae-Jin)

There was always the possibility, since the future was not set in stone. I spoke to her with a light grin, and Sae-Jung returned a bit more relaxed smile of her own.

“In that case, I should just select the venue and send out invitations in the meantime, right?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“.....Ng. Be ready and wait for me.” (Sae-Jin)

I answered her like so, and hugged her tightly. Her petite body felt unusually pitiful

and small today, for some reason. I even almost broke out in tears, but somehow, held back.

But not too long after, a soft sobbing stabbed into my ears. Sae-Jung was crying.

SFX for patting of the back

Unfortunately, the only thing I could do was to gently pat her back.

Right now, I wish the night would flow just a bit slower than normal.



(TL: Still told from MC's perspective.)

During the early dawn, when the sun hadn't broken the navy blue darkness just yet – I Spiritualised my diary and carried it to the location of the underground portal.

It had been only one day, yet the sight before me perfectly fitted the description "hell on earth" to a T.

Strange, monstrous beings that resembled snakes, dogs, etc, and then, there was that unidentifiable creature wriggling about within the black mucous substance... and Bathory was here, battling all by herself.

"Lots of mini portals opened up all over the planet now." (Bathory)

She took a glance at my direction and told me while burning away the tide of Monsters.

"Half of those mini portals will act as doorways to another world, while the rest, well, they will become the gates of hell with Monsters pouring out." (Bathory)

She spoke in a roundabout way to let me know that the time was finally up.

I walked towards the portal without saying anything.

The thing I had to do was exceedingly simple.

I just needed to wade through the portal, seemingly choked full with countless Monsters forcing their way out from the distant, unspeakably deep bottom.

It sounded rather simple, but it required an unimaginable amount of bravery, so I briefly wondered whether I should pour myself a stiff drink or not.

“Hey, you listening?” (Bathory)

I slightly turned my head to look at her.

“Yeah.” (Sae-Jin)

“You’re really going to act according to that plan of yours? Even if you succeed, the end of the world won’t change – the portal might close, but that won’t take care of the remaining Monsters in this world, you know? And in case you fail, that’s even worse than a dog’s death, too.” (Bathory)

“...No need for useless talk, but let me ask you one thing. Bathory, you and your underlings aren’t planning to jump into the portal, right?” (Sae-Jin)

Inside this portal, there was a ‘door’ that allowed one to go to the past, or to another world, a new dimension.

“.....”

Bathory bit her lower lip as if she had thought about this matter over and over again. And the answer coming from that deep deliberation was a wonderful one, the kind I really liked hearing.

“I’m remaining here.” (Bathory)

“Very good.” (Sae-Jin)

As if she didn’t care for my grin, her eyes narrowed to a slit while she spoke.

“...It’s not because you persuaded me, okay? Well, my homeworld ravaged by these motherf*ckers isn’t my old homeworld anymore, anyway.” (Bathory)

“It’s the correct decision.” (Sae-Jin)

Now that Bathory agreed to help, there was nothing to stop me here. There was no need for a grand ceremony, either. Oh, and no point in hesitating, too.

I transformed into the Lycan Form, and carefully observed the other side of the portal.

The portal was spitting out things as if it was erupting out like a volcano. These things kind of resembled bits of human flesh, but also wriggled around like an individual organism.

That grotesque sight was truly disgusting, but at the same time, fear inducing.

But I needed to be brave.

In order to live, this was something I just had to do.

“Well, I’m off.” (Sae-Jin)

I didn’t need a countdown.

The ticking of a clock would only erode my resolve, anyway.

With a simple leap, I jumped down into the portal.

“What the?! H, hey!! Wait a sec...” (Bathory)

I heard Bathory’s surprised voice behind me.

But soon enough, all sounds disappeared, and I sank deeper and deeper into the gap of nothingness.



(TL: Still from MC’s... well, you get the idea.)

The sticky, unwelcome sensation of the mucous membrane only hung around in the beginning; as time passed, I could feel nothing at all. It was as if the sensation of touch had been robbed from me.

I tried to look around.

I once heard that the inside of a portal resembled that of the wild, unclaimed nature, but all I saw was the jet-black darkness. Even the stars that blinked faintly in the distance got swallowed up by this all-conquering darkness.

Was I looking at the vast expanse of the outer space?

Wait, didn't the space also form a part of the 'nature', too?

My mind got drowsy and my thoughts were blurring.

It was hard to tell whether I was still breathing, moving, or even if I was still alive or dead.

Suddenly, a turbid stream of something rushed past me quite violently, and it shot up and up.

Within this black stream, I witnessed the hidden creatures' pulsing beats and felt their maddened eyes on me.

But thanks to them, I remembered the reason why I was here in the first place.

I had to go to where this stream came from, so I fixed my heading opposite to the direction of the flow.

And then, time flowed and flowed.

Was it a minute, or one hour? One day? Maybe a month, or even a whole year?

Trapped within this unexplainable 'world', I feared that my ego, the sense of self, would retard and scatter away, never to become whole again.

"There... '

Not too long after, or perhaps an eternity later, a massive black 'gap' that looked like a blackhole revealed itself in the far distance.

That 'blackhole' quivered continuously and spat out monstrous creatures nonstop.

Instinctively, my eyes snapped open wide.

My fatigued and weakened body was revitalised by the pulse of life, and it felt like my head was burning up now.

As if they had sensed the change, the creatures spat out from the blackhole left the

turbid stream and surrounded me, clinging onto me. Unexpectedly, it felt very cold, and painful, too.

So, I transformed into the Fenrir.

[The host has transformed into the legendary Fenrir! For the next (12) hours, the Wolf that kills gods, Fenrir...]

Suddenly, my eye level changed, and my sight cleared up completely.

A Monster busy clinging onto my waist seemed as small as a speck of dust.

Even the blackhole looked like a slightly big cotton candy to me.

So, I swallowed it whole, just like that.

The blackhole got crushed like a pulp and got sucked into my mouth.

[An existence that can not be handled by the host has been absorbed...]

If this was what I had to do, then well, without a fanfare, I've done it.

But then, too many of the Monsters had left towards Earth. If I was to help Bathory and kill them, I had to go back as soon as possible.

'It hurts a bit, though... '

But my body didn't want to move.

Was this a severe case of indigestion? Or was I dying for good?

Unable to budge an inch, I just floated within the dark emptiness while submerged in

thoughts. One possibility I've been denying until now entered my head.

Perhaps, did the future me die and no longer exist?

It really did feel like that was the case. It really was a persuasive argument, and I stopped my endless voyage.

I wanted to disappear along with the cold yet burning sensation of the stars wrapping around my body, and every little *thing* wriggling so naughtily within me.

I began recalling old memories, one by one.

I remembered going home while holding mom's hand when I was really young... but then, I couldn't recall anything for the next 15 years after that.

Maybe that was par for the course, really. Before my Trait manifested, I lived a shadow-like life where I was neither alive nor dead, after all.

However, the memories of the past five years were so, so vivid and real.

I met Kim Yu-Rin, met Hazeline, met Yu Sae-Jung, met Kim Yu-Sohn, and met Joo Ji-Hyuk, and, and... a brilliantly shining life interconnected by many encounters and friendships.

Only then, my purpose and resolve finally surfaced from the muddy, sleepy waters of my fading consciousness.

I couldn't stop here. I promised Sae-Jung that I'd return, after all.

And besides – there was something else I still had to do. In order to succeed in pretty much anything, taking 'care of the aftermaths' was very important.

My mind spun faster than ever before.

The future version of me, whose whereabouts were unknown.

The existence called as the devourer of the dimensions, a being that not even Bathory could stand up against.

And finally, the time required for the divine creature of the legends, the Leviathan, to

mature fully.

And I found my answer.

When I opened my eyes, I saw a dim point of light far, far away.

With all my might, I began doggie-pedalling towards that light.

“*SFX for retching*”

Suddenly, I felt nauseous. The portal to the past was over there, yet the gap between the worlds and its immense pressure was forcibly restraining me.

In order to endure, I gritted my teeth and transformed into the Leviathan Form.

[The Skill “Ultimate Resistance” has been activated. The host will resist the universe’s laws and its suppression for a short period of time.]

The alert window said as much, yet it felt like my limbs were twisting apart at the seams and my entire being felt like melting from the terrifying heat.

But I did not give up.

I dashed towards that point of light nonstop.

And only after all my scales were burned away, when my eyes got seared into blindness and the world became nothing but darkness, only then...

I exited into the brilliant brightness of the sunlight.



(TL: Still told from MC’s viewpoint.)

I opened my eyes.

The first thing I saw was the bright sunlight and the densely packed verdant forest. I remained on my back for the next five minutes while trying to figure out what was going on, before standing up in a hurry.

Was I in a human's appearance?

Yes, I was.

What about the alert windows?

They worked just fine.

"Whew..."

A sigh of relief escaped from my lips automatically.

After getting a hold of myself, I found some leeway to check out the surrounding area.

"....."

But I became speechless soon enough.

There were no skyscrapers. There were no asphalt roads. There were no modern buildings either.

What greeted me was a whole bunch of traditional houses with tiled and thatched roofs, a fortress and watchtowers, many horse-drawn carts and carriages, and finally, the smell of cow manure serving as fertiliser.

Yep, the sight before my eyes were straight out of the Joseon era. (*TL: a Korean dynasty established in 1392. Lasted until 1910.*)

"...So, that's why nothing was written on the diary about this part, huh."

I muttered to myself.

It was impossible to figure out what the year was. Well, I thought that I might need 500 to 600 years if the Leviathan needed to reach the maturity, so, let's say this was 550 years back in the past.

And, if I was to sleep for half a year, then that meant I had to spend at least 1000 days wide awake.

“Hmm...”

For some reason, “*hmm*” continued to leak out of my lips.

Okay, I should think this over thoroughly.

500 years should be more than enough for the Leviathan Form to reach adulthood. A fully-grown Leviathan should be able to fight against the devourer of the dimensions, or so referred to as by Bathory herself.

I already resolved myself to the possibility of a lengthy wait. Well, I was going to wait far longer than I expected, though.

I raised my head and stared into the far off distance.

A blue ocean was gently undulating over yonder like silk under the clear sunlight.

That must have been the East Sea. Meaning, my bedroom was right over there.

“...Oh well. Naught but to wait, I guess.”

I would wait.

If I endure, endure, and endure a bit more, then it’d be the correct time sooner rather than later.



(TL:... Still told from the MC’s point of view.)

When the Leviathan went to sleep, it’d be for three months straight. And when it woke up, well, it had to stay awake for a week. Most of the time while I was in slumber, I remained at the bottom of the ocean, but when I was awake, I walked around Joseon to see what was what.

And so, I got to witness with my own two eyes, the historical moment when the creation of Hunmumjeong-eum took place; the wretchedness and horrors of the

Japanese invasion between 1592 and 1598; the humiliation of the Manchu War of 1636. (TL: *Hunmumjeong-eum* is the original Korean alphabet system invented under the rule of King Sejong.)

I lost count how many times I clenched my fist while watching the foreign invaders rape and pillage the land; when witnessing the common folk suffer through horrible unfairness completely unimaginable in a modern society.

But I never once tried to do something that might change the history.

Things I could influence were limited to a few events, after all.

And so, time continued to flow by while I waited.

I remained awake for only three weeks a year, but still, the remaining days were just too many.

It became progressively harder to maintain my sanity.

Sometimes, I missed everyone terribly.

Sometimes, my urges became a problem.

Sometimes, a rage that couldn't be kept down tried to drown me.

Every passing day was a torture, and I gradually grew to fear the sun setting and the moon rising over each passing day.

That was why, I sometimes went to a village of human beings.

Rather happily enough, I could converse just fine with people, although there were some differences in pronunciation and the meaning of certain words.

"Barmaid, get me a bowl of rice and soup, please."

I got a hankering for food with grain, so I sought out a traditional roadside tavern. A big dude with 188 centimetre tall height was ordering with a loud voice, so perhaps inevitably, all attention got focused to my direction. While I waited for my food in somewhat of a daze, a man who had been watching me with strange eyes initiated a conversation.

“You have a good physique there, young man.”

“Haha. Thank you.” (Sae-Jin)

“Are you perchance a military man?”

“No, just a commoner.” (Sae-Jin)

“Hmm...”

The man stroked his lengthy beard and nodded his head.

Then, my food arrived.

I couldn’t help but stare at the small bowl and a pathetically small amount of grub inside, and then, chuckled softly.

“I see that the current state of affairs for us common folk aren’t so good right now.” (Sae-Jin)

“But of course. We haven’t had rain for quite some time now, as if the gods have become annoyed with us.”

“No rain has fallen?” (Sae-Jin)

“Indeed. This drought is lasting longer than previous years, too... It’s quite a worrisome matter, really.”

The man looked really worried as he sighed out.

I smirked slightly while looking at him.

“Rain... rain, you say. Well, you might have rain later on today.” (Sae-Jin)

“.....What do you mean?”

The man tilted his head slightly, but soon, a sneer formed on his lips and he asked me again.

“Are you perchance a shaman?”

“Well, close enough.” (Sae-Jin)

“Huhuhuh.”

The man laughed. But it wasn’t just him now – everyone here in the tavern was laughing along as well.

“What a funny person he is.”

“He looks fine on the outside, yet...”

They were sneering out comments one after the other.

“Haha. Well, we shall see later on.” (Sae-Jin)

I simply carried a thick smile on my face.

Chapter 169

The Wait (4)

Causing rain to fall was a rather easy job for me. After I gathered water particles in the atmosphere and created cumulonimbus clouds, rain fell on the following day.

“Oh, here he comes!”

Under the grey sky and thick, incessant falling rain drops, I entered the roadside tavern while raindrops slid off the large straw hat I was wearing at the time, to find men from yesterday waiting for me with stunned faces.

“Fella, you have the divine touch!”

The first guy to talk to me showed off an especially exaggerated reaction. He barged his way through and occupied a seat right next to mine.

“Haha. Barmaid, a bowl of rice and soup, please.” (Sae-Jin)

First things first, I ordered food. Meanwhile, the guy asked me with a face of a man dying of curiosity.

“How did you know?”

“I simply asked god, that’s all.” (Sae-Jin)

Both eyes of the man went extra round.

“Are you saying you can talk to a god?”

“Well, something like that.” (Sae-Jin)

“That is amazing!”

While we laughed and conversed in not very important topics, my grub was placed on the table.

And well, I could see that the amount had doubled compared to yesterday.

“Ohh, looks delicious.” (Sae-Jin)

“You know, the next district to ours is also suffering through a drought, so, is it possible to find out when it’ll rain over there?”

Hearing the man’s query, I smiled deeply while shoving the rice in my mouth.

“Most likely, about two days later.” (Sae-Jin)

“Two days later... Ah, dang it. We haven’t even introduced ourselves, yet, have we? I am called Yi Si-Eup. And you’re...”

“Unni~, Here’s your ingredients~.”

It was then, a refreshingly open and honest voice tickled my ears. I took a glance and saw a young girl. The guy followed my gaze, and then grinned lewdly while poking my side with his elbow.

“It seems like your eyes are working just fine, huh. She’s the most beautiful girl in our village, you see. She’s a bit on the young side, but well, her age’s just about right to get married, don’t you think so?” (Yi Si-Eup)

“.....”

To call her the most beautiful was... Maybe my standard had risen or something, but she only seemed just about above average to me. Couldn’t be sure whether such a view was because of the era I was in or not, though.

I smirked slightly and shook my head.

“I already have someone waiting for me.” (Sae-Jin)

“But, you haven’t even had *sangtu* done yet?” (TL: *Sangtu* is a hairstyle reserved only for “adult” males in the Joseon-era Korea.)

“...Keum. I will have it done once I go back home.” (Sae-Jin)

“Is that right? How regrettable. Hum, hum. Oii, barmaid, give me the same rice and

soup bowl as this young man over here."

However, Yi Si-Eup received only half a bowl and as a side dish, and received an earful of complaints. The barmaid, the tavern owner as it turned out, told him to settle his tab first.

I grinned faintly and gazed at the two, then felt a pair of eyes on me.

Turning my head around, I found that 'most beautiful girl in the county' staring at me quite openly.

"Heup!!"

When our eyes met, she shyly averted her gaze, somewhat in a hurry.

But soon enough, her eyes stealthily sought me out again, only to meet my gaze once more.

"!!!! U, unni, I'm going now."

In the end, she left the tavern as if running away.

"Heuhmmm."

Hmm. Without a doubt, the 'value' of my appearance was great, no matter what era it was.

I swept my hair back, full of unnecessary pride.

But, well – it seemed that the folks of the village were far more interested in me predicting the rain, rather than how I looked like.

A short time passed by before more villagers rushed in to the tavern.

As if the rumour had gotten around, even the people from the neighbouring villages showed up hurriedly and asked about the rain.

"...You might get some rain at your side around four days from today." (Sae-Jin)

"W, what about our village?"

“You don’t have to worry, as it’ll rain there very soon.” (Sae-Jin)

After that day, I somehow ended up acting as a spokesperson for the gods.

But I found it quite fun, being among the simple and honest folks.

And as I began staying within the village, even a few housewives developed a sort of ‘interest’ in me as well.

Of course, the ‘most beautiful girl’ in the village was included in that group, but well, my standards had been increased after being together with Yu Sae-Jung for so long... I came up with an excuse of me being an aimless wanderer, and politely declined all of their advances.

A week went by, and the time for me to go to ‘sleep’ arrived once more.

“You’re heading off now?”

“Yes. I shall return in three months’ time.” (Sae-Jin)

“Three months, you say... How regrettable. You were indeed the only person I could talk to properly around here. Folks around these parts are too simple and straightforward, you see.”

“Haha. I actually preferred that, Yi Si-Eup *ong*.” (TL: “*Ong*” is an archaic form of honorific, used to address an older male.)

I lowered my head.

“Be safe on your way. And don’t forget to stop by.”

With the dignified farewell from the man, Yi Si-Eup, behind me, I left the village that I grew rather fond of during this short stay.



Beneath the deep sea that seemed to swallow all sunlight, I opened my eyes. Already, three months had gone by.

I checked the alert windows first. Too bad, the Leviathan Form only grew by a fraction

of a percent.

A disappointed groan automatically escaped my mouth. However, that groan morphed into a violent underwater storm and rushed towards the surface. Startled silly by this mistake, I quickly reined in the wayward flow of water and reverted back to the human's appearance.

Once I got to the shore, I yawned out loudly and stretched my limbs out. Then, I headed back to the village.

It'd been only three months, yet the most beautiful girl in the village, the one who was said to like me very much, had settled down with another dude already. The husband was a farmer well known in the village for being honest and hard-working. She was somewhat flustered by my resurgence, but I simply congratulated with a generous smile.

Yi Si-Eup welcomed me back with open arms. He didn't ask me about the rain, though – but did inquire if I'd be willing to help out during the Autumn harvest. Of course, I agreed to do it. Well, I was confident of working harder and smarter than a cow, at any rate.

However, I realised how difficult it was. Harvesting required skill, far more than actual physical strength, as it turned out.

But, maybe due to the Goblin's Craftsmanship Skill, I was able to rapidly adopt to the job. By the end of the fourth day, I had become the greatest farmer on earth – going so as far as to take on the entire village's workload by myself.

The week's worth of time flew by like an arrow as I helped out with the harvest, and I had to go and sleep once more.

I bid everyone a much harder farewell compared to the last time and returned to the ocean.

Afterwards, every three months, when the seasons changed, I visited the same village.

The villagers always welcomed me back, and fun things always happened there.

This was a simple life, a lifestyle I found to be my liking.

However... the villagers and I weren't living on the same flow of time; as the days went by, sorrowful events began to occur.

Three years later, the very first person to engage me in small talk, Yi Si-Eup, contracted tuberculosis and passed away.

Two years after that, his wife also passed on.

A year after that, the barmaid of the tavern I frequented came down with an illness. Naturally, the tavern had to close.

It was over six years to them. It was just over three months for me.

With that much time passing by, it became increasingly difficult to visit the village anymore. People began suspecting me who didn't seem to age one bit. Some started treating me as if I was a god, while a few idiots who thought I was some kind of a devil also emerged.

And so, I had to leave the village for good.

Afterwards, I never remained in one village for too long, and wandered around without a destination.

Flowers bloomed and wilted countless times; monsoon flooded the world numerous times; and snow dyed the ground white many more times.

I thought of living through the ages as my duty, a job that I had to do and lived on, while disinterestedly watching the world flow by.

Coincidentally, I ran into 'Dasan' Jeong Yak-Yong. (*TL note at the end.*)

Just as he was known in the history book, I got to see his saint-like actions first hand.

And then, the period of In-Law Governance of the Joseon era, that would eventually cause the downfall of the kingdom, began. Every village I went to, people seemed to get more distrusting and callous than before; and the number of highwaymen attacking travelers increased as well.

When Gojong became the new king, his royal regent Prince Yi Ha-Eung seized all political power.

He controlled all the royal relatives, pursued isolation policy, and enjoyed his rise to prominence for a while.

But his wild ambitions couldn't last long.

An unidentified battleship entered the territorial waters of Ganghwa island.

It was the Ganghwa island incident of 1875.

Completely humiliated by a lone warship, Joseon was forced to sign the Treaty of Ganghwa on February 27, 1876.

On Gapsin-nyun, a coup happened. But the gallant youths couldn't even endure until the first signs of snow melting, and either died or ran away.

The Donghak Peasant Revolution failed, and I witnessed the announcement of the Protectorate Treaty between Japan and Joseon.

And on first of March that year, I watched as the sadness and anger of the citizens who had lost their country spread out like the undulating ripples on the water's surface.

I saw the young men of this country, forcibly drafted into military service because of another's imperialistic desire to conquer.

However, the sun still rose every morning, and time continued to flow by without care.

Today, five hundred years after my arrival in 1440, was August 15th, 1940, exactly five years before the liberation from the Japanese Occupation.

"Alcohol... is it."

I was walking on the streets of Gyeongseong, when I spotted a Western-style establishment that had opened its doors not too long ago. I haven't touched a drop of the good stuff for the past 100 years or so. Having had my interest piqued, I headed there. (*TL: Gyeongseong was the name of Seoul while under Japanese Occupation.*)

SFX for a doorbell chiming

The bell clanged loudly as I pushed the door open. There were quite a few patrons within the joint, yet, there must be something about my tall height and the dignified-

looking long beard – everyone's attention was focused on me almost immediately.

For now, I pulled my hat down deeply and found an empty spot at the bar, then ordered a glass of expensive imported liquor. As I was taking a couple of sips, a certain man not too far from me caught my eyes.

He had a pair of straight-cut eyebrows; his lips were resolutely shut, and his eyes gleamed sharply, as if he was staring into the far off distance.

His appearance alone showed that he was a man's man, yet, as far as performing his duties went, he seemed to be a complete noob.

There was this faint whiff of chemicals from his bag, and then, he was nervously checking his watch every five minutes or so.

I could tell that he was a man about to do something 'very big'.

I spoke to a barkeep and sent a bottle of the most expensive tipple this joint had over to that guy.

He seemed quite flustered initially, but when he finally located me, he bowed his head in thanks.

I didn't stop there, and initiated a conversation with him.

"What's your name?" (Sae-Jin)

The man seemed to be surprised at my Korean and trembled a little bit, but still managed to answer me.

"It's Yu Hyung-Jin."

Yu Hyung-Jin..... Yu Hyung-Jin. When I thought about it, I realised I had heard of this name before.

I tilted my head a little and asked him.

"By any chance, do you have a son?" (Sae-Jin)

The man, Yu Hyung-Jin, deliberated a bit before answering me.

“...I do.”

“May I ask for his name?” (Sae-Jin)

“Why are you suddenly inquiring after my child’s name?”

“Is it fine to think of it as the payment for the drink?” (Sae-Jin)

Only then, he replied with a slightly unwilling face.

“...It’s Yu Dae-Ho.”

Suddenly, a lightbulb went off in my head.

Yu Dae-Ho.

That was the name of Yu Sae-Jung’s grandfather. The founder of the Dawn Corporation, too.

And this man here, Yu Hyung-Jin. The father of Yu Dae-Ho, he was a freedom fighter who carried out a bombing five years before the liberation. But, he unfortunately didn’t get to see the new dawn’s sun rising; he breathed his last after five years of being locked up behind the bars.

Wasn’t the award the Dawn Corporation gave to outstanding people of the society called ‘Yu Hyung-Jin’ award?

“And who you might be, asking these strange questions?” (Yu Hyung-Jin)

Yu Hyung-Jin asked with a suspicious glint in his eyes. Seeing that his hand was lowering towards his waist, he must be reaching towards his revolver.

“I am the same human as you.” (Sae-Jin)

While speaking like this, I pulled out a lump of pure yellow thing from my inner pocket. Since it was cumbersome to carry all the different currency of the history, I chose to carry around a few items of value instead, and now was the perfect time to use them.

Yu Hyung-Jin looked at me with a confused face and asked again.

“Same human as me...?” (Yu Hyung-Jin)

“I was searching for you until now.” (Sae-Jin)

“Searching for me?” (Yu Hyung-Jin)

“That’s right. Carrying out an important mission would mean nothing if your family goes to bed starving. Take these, and use them for your child’s education.” (Sae-Jin)

I handed over four 500g gold ingots to him. Yu Hyung-Jin’s eyes were dyeing in the colours of pure panic.

“These are pure gold. No matter what anyone else says, they are gold. Remember that, and take them.” (Sae-Jin)

“W, why are you...”

“I told you. For your child’s education.” (Sae-Jin)

Yu Hyung-Jin swallowed nervously. But, I couldn’t see a single trace of greed in his eyes, only the desperation he felt for the family he was about to leave behind.

“What are you waiting for? Take them with you, already.” (Sae-Jin)

When I urged him on, he hesitantly reached out towards the gold ingots.

“However!!” (Sae-Jin)

Just as his hands touched the gold, I roughly grabbed his arm.

“You must swear you will never use these for your personal gain. You must swear that you’ll never give these to the resistance movement, and that you will only spend them for your family.” (Sae-Jin)

Well, these gold ingots needed to become the starting capital for Yu Dae-Ho in the future, after all.

Yu Hyung-Jin stared at me with dumbfounded eyes, and soon, nodded his head.

“...I will.”



After that encounter with the unexpected person, I headed back to the hotel I was staying at.

Pouring myself another glass of that imported liquor, I sat down on a chair and opened my diary.

The diary that I looked at whenever I missed everyone so much, whenever I was about to lose sense of who I was. There were stains from my fingers, along with dried spots of tears, clearly visible on the pages.

“I have waited for a really long time, haven’t I.” (Sae-Jin)

Enduring for over 500 years, the day I encountered Lillia for the first time was drawing nearer.

The date was another five years after the liberation.

I’ve already heard about the very first place Lillia began her journey on this planet from her own mouth, so I knew where to go.

Thump, thump...

It’d been a long time, and my heart began pounding heavily once more.



Finally, the independence arrived, and within the desperate poverty of the people, five years flew by.

And the date today was June 20th, 1950 – five days before the Korean War commenced.

I went to the underwater cavern near Gangwon Province, the one Lillia told me about. She said that, back then, she was the Nosferatu’s advanced scout and had crossed over before everyone else, in order to suss out potential places for her clansmen to live.

And well, I found her – a silhouette of an old man with his bent back, checking out the cavern with the head tilted slightly as if deep in thought. If I pull off that robe, then she’d return to the appearance of a woman.

I sneaked to her rear and lightly tapped on her shoulder.

"Hi there." (Sae-Jin)

"%\$&*!!!!!! Gracehobiack?!?!"

Her robe melted away powerlessly, and Lillia screamed out in curse words while falling on her rear.

"...?"

Even I was taken back. Was Lillia's original personality like this? That face definitely belonged to Lillia, so...

Her face completely reddened now, Lillia continued to pour out curses as if she had no clue of my inner turmoil.

"*Stpem fabohac racehobiack!!!*"

"...Speak in Korean, will you." (Sae-Jin)

"*Fragh!!*"

"I told you to speak in Korean." (Sae-Jin)

As if she had finally understood me, Lillia took several deep breaths, and then...

"What the f*ck!!!! Who the f*ck are you, you son of a b*tch?!" (Lillia)

I became completely speechless.

But, well – me getting older wasn't a waste of time, after all. I had matured enough not to get flustered by the advent of an unexpected situation, and be able to figure out what was going on calmly enough.

Right. 70 years into the past, then her age would be just about on the money for the youthful, energetic phase.

Didn't someone once say that even a mighty mountain would change in ten years? In that case, such a massive change in personality could certainly happen, sure.

“Die! Die! Diiiiiie!!” (Lillia)

Well before I could gather myself properly, Lillia began swinging her sharp nails quite aggressively.

I easily evaded her attacks, reached out with my hand, and tightly grasped her neck.

Five minutes later...

“I’m terribly sorry.....”

She was kneeling on the floor with a black eye decorating her face.

(“Dasan” Jeong Yak-Yong: a Korean philosopher who lived between 1762 to 1836. ‘Dasan’ is a title he was known by, and it simply means ‘the mountain of tea’. He has a Wikipedia page in English if you’re curious.)

(The Ganghwa Island Incident refers to when a Japanese warship entered Joseon’s territorial waters under the pretext of searching for drinkable water. Battle ensued and Joseon lost, leading to the signing of the Treaty which gave Japan a lot of benefits.)

(Gapsin Coup has also a dedicated Wikipedia page in English. A Gapsin-nyun is an ancient calendar system used in Joseon era – in the modern calendar system, it’s 1884. Think of it as those Edo or whatever system you read about in Japanese WN, and you’re almost there)

(Donghak Peasant Revolution also has a fairly substantial Wikipedia page, in English. Go check it out if you’re interested, especially if you wish to find out what eventually led to the Sino-Japanese War – the clue: this failed revolution.)

(Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty was signed on at the end of February, 1904. Another one was signed on 1905, which completely deprived Korea of sovereignty. The dedicated Wikipedia page can tell you a lot more than me and this small space, so if you have the time, check it out.)

Chapter 170

In the End (1)

A Vampire's lifespan was usually twice that of a modern-day human being. Plus, the nobler a bloodline was, the longer the life expectancy became; and then, there were unique Vampires with ageless appearance as well those boasting much, much longer lifespan as well, such as that el Las kid. So, after considering all those points, Lillia decided that she'd refuse to believe Sae-Jin was a human being.

"You say you're a human, yet you've lived for how long...?" (Lillia)

Her expressions showed her complete failure to understand this quandary. Of course, this was par for the course, really.

To 'share' the same time period with others were a prerequisite element to being alive, so, no longer constrained by the normal flow of time, Sae-Jin came very close to losing his sense of self, his ego.

"...Technically, I haven't lived for that long time. The actual time I spent awake is only around 50 years or so." (Sae-Jin)

Waiting around had become too much burden to endure. It was just too unbearable nowadays.

Hell, he even ended up suffering the worst of all bad inflictions he could've come down with – insomnia. He probably couldn't fall asleep for almost two years back then.

Whenever he remembered back to those times, Sae-Jin had to wonder just how he had endured until now. It was to a point where even he himself was mystified by it, and felt somewhat proud, as well.

Whatever the case may have been, the Leviathan's growth rate had finally reached 95%. If he waited for another 70 years or so, he was confident of reaching the fully matured state.

"Lillia, there's something I want to ask you about." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin looked down at the kneeling Lillia and grinned slightly. Even at that simple gesture, she was trembling quite pitifully. She was reminded of the past not too long ago when she got mercilessly pummeled by nothing more than Sae-Jin's single magic spell, that was why.

"And your reply should be...?" (Sae-Jin)

"Y, yes, sir. Ask me anything..." (Lillia)

Compared to how on the knife-edge she sounded before the beating, her voice was far more softer now. It sounded more or less like Lillia from his memories, so Sae-Jin felt quite chuffed by that.

"By any chance, do you want to go back to your homeworld?" (Sae-Jin)

In a way, what he asked about was completely out of the blue. Lillia became dazed for a minute there, before she shook her head quite vigorously.

"No, no, no. No way. I can't go back to that hellhole now..." (Lillia)

"But, what if you could go back?" (Sae-Jin)

".....Eh?"

To be absolutely honest, if he were to take care of the Vampire Lord and that el Las kid as they were about to cross over, then the world would not experience the Fissure opening up way ahead of schedule, like how it was with his future. According to Bathory, it would've only opened up naturally after 100 years or so.

However.

It was indeed a terribly selfish wish of his, but if he did stop them now, then it was unknown whether 'he' would be able to meet any of those precious people or not. They might even forget about the existence of 'Kim Sae-Jin' altogether, as well.

What was the real purpose of him waiting and enduring the past 600 years? What was it?

Wasn't it simply because he wanted to see them again?

He came to the past to save the world because, in the process of saving everyone, he also benefited from that as well.

There was no grand reason. That was it, his sole purpose.

That was why... he'd never ever do something that might threaten the direction of the future.

"I don't understand what you're telling me..." (Lillia)

"I'll explain the details to you later. For now, listen. I came from the future, Lillia." (Sae-Jin)

"Eii, what nonsense are y... Euh?! Wha?!? Kkyahh!!!!" (Lillia)

No need for a lengthy chat – he simply transformed into the Leviathan. It was quite a sight seeing Lillia's expression quickly change from shock, panic and then to pure, unbridled fear.

However, there was something he had overlooked just now – and that was the fact that his body size had ballooned up to a terrifying level recently.

After all, a Leviathan's size was too big for the girth of the Han River to contend with, so how could a measly little underwater cavern even dare to try containing him?

The divine creature of the oceans that resembled the legendary dragons grew larger and larger and larger, until it eventually slammed into the cavern's ceiling and started a massive tremor.

"#%\$@?!!!" (Lillia)

Lillia screamed out in terror and fell back on her butt again. Sae-Jin hurriedly reverted back to the human form, but by then, as if its 'lifespan' had come to an end, the entire cavern began to quake and collapse all around them.

"We, we need to escape..... Kkyaaahck!!" (Lillia)

KKKHOO-GU-GU-GUONG

And finally, the cavern broke apart.

Sae-Jin grabbed the screaming woman's shoulder and initiated instant transmission.

When he opened his eyes, they had arrived at the bottom of a certain cliff – the place where the Nosferatus had made their nest.

"Euh....."

Lillia had shut her eyes so tightly, her eyelids were trembling quite noticeably.

Sae-Jin patted her head and spoke up.

"You guys stay here from now on. You can avoid the Lord's eye in here, too. And, this place is sturdy enough that even after you carve out an underground city, the earth will hold just fine." (Sae-Jin)

Only then, Lillia opened her eyes. And she stared at his gentle smile with absentminded eyes.

"Follow me." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin placed his palm on the surface of the cliff's face, and activated a magic spell. And on the path where his magic flowed by, a passageway opened up.

"I've opened up the space. As for construction, I'm sure you can do that better than me." (Sae-Jin)

Sae-Jin finished creating an underground cavern with a size big enough to accommodate around ten thousand Nosferatus, and was about to take out his diary – but, he felt doubt creep up, so he sneaked a glance at Lillia's direction.

The appearance of her surveying the surroundings with a dumbfounded face made her look completely unprepared and way too naïve, so he figured it was too early for her to handle this book.

"...But, before that." (Sae-Jin)

His baritone voice resounded deeply.

"Let's depart on a training journey for a while." (Sae-Jin)

“Excuse me?” (Lillia)

Lillia tilted her head in confusion.

“What are you even... Excuse me, I can’t even begin to fathom what the heck is going on here right now, you know? And it hadn’t even been a day since we met, s...” (Lillia)

Before she could finish, Sae-Jin activated instant transmission once more.

The new scenery before their eyes was an uninhabited island literally in the middle of nowhere.

“What the hell?!” (Lillia)

“Temper your personality. The future ‘you’ is not a ruffian like the current you.” (Sae-Jin)

“Calling me a ruffian... No, wait a minute. I am supposed to become the next leader of all Nosferatus, so I can’t be wasting time like this! And besides, it really hasn’t been even a day since we met... Kkhyack!!” (Lillia)

Without saying a word, Sae-Jin fired off a blast of air. Swept away by that forceful push, Lillia fell into the ocean and then, began shouting while splashing water everywhere.

“H, hey!! I can’t swim!! Save me!!!!” (Lillia)

“**SFX for an old-fashioned guffaw** Learn to save yourself.” (Sae-Jin)

SFX for struggling to breathe while sinking

Lillia’s arms and legs hurriedly thrashed about, and she continued to spit out seawater out of her mouth as she rapidly began to drown.

“Please, help me!! Save me!!” (Lillia)

“No. This is all a part of training jour...” (Sae-Jin)

“Save me, you rotten son of a b*****tch!!!!” (Lillia)

“.....”

He really thought that he'd forgotten about how to get angry, but before he knew it, Sae-Jin was already gritting his teeth.



Other than the odd occasions where she had to enter the city limits to guide the arriving Nosferatus to their new underground base, Lillia spent close to half a year in that uninhabited island with Sae-Jin as the only company.

During that time, a ton of rehabilitation (?) training happened. He taught her magic and how to swim; the importance of the stable supply of sustenance; told her of things that would happen in the future, thereby doing his best to change and fortify Lillia's mindset.

And the end result was that, Lillia got to possess some semblance of that composed, relaxed demeanor Sae-Jin saw from her in the future.

After thinking that this much was enough, Sae-Jin said his farewell to her exactly on the 200th day of the training.

“I’m going now.” (Sae-Jin)

“Eh?”

“What, you don’t want me to leave?” (Sae-Jin)

“No, no!! That’s not it!” (Lillia)

Maybe he was too hard on her until now? Lillia’s expression as she vigorously nodded her head was stuck somewhere between joy and regret. Of course, the scale leaned ever so closer to joy.

While grinning, Sae-Jin added one more thing.

“Right. This is your freedom, the one you’ve been dearly praying for. By the way, if you happen to find out the exact location of the Lord’s hidey hole, let me know via communication magic, okay?” (Sae-Jin)

“Oh, sure... Uh? But, why would you need that...?” (Lillia)

“There’s something I gotta do.” (Sae-Jin)

The Lord said that he had misplaced the treasure that controlled the survival instincts of Vampires, their bloodlust. However, unless he was suffering from a powerful dementia brought on by his extremely advanced age, there was just no way he’d ‘misplace’ something that incredibly valuable. No, it’d make more sense if someone stole it away, instead.

And the thief responsible for that would be... Well, there was no strict reason to mention that now, was there?

“Sure, I understand.” (Lillia)

As if she desired to get rid of Sae-Jin as soon as possible, Lillia answered quickly.

“Also...” (Sae-Jin)

Smack!

“Ah-ahck.”

Since he didn’t find her attitude all that nice, Sae-Jin flicked her forehead, and then, pulled out the diary. Lillia stared at it with blank eyes, before finally asking him aloud.

“.....This is?” (Lillia)

“It’s the diary of the future I wrote in the past. It’ll work out better if you tell the others it’s a book of prophecy, or something like that. Then, they’ll believe you even more.” (Sae-Jin)

“Ah, in other words, all the things that will happen from now on are...” (Lillia)

“Right. Make a copy, mock it up to look like an ancient tome or such, and hand it over to the Lord, as well.” (Sae-Jin)

Lillia reached out and snatched the diary away, before trying to open it willy-nilly, so Sae-Jin hurriedly grabbed her hands.

“Keheum!!”

Then, he glared at her, full of intimidating pressure that implied she should read it when he wasn't here.

Lillia quickly understood the gist of the stare and nodded her head, before hiding the diary within her clothes.

"Okay, then. I'll be on my way. I will see you later. I shall stop by at your place once before it gets too late. Got it?" (Sae-Jin)

SFX for a sudden flash of light

Sae-Jin turned into blue light, before disappearing from the spot.

Left alone, Lillia cautiously turned her head to survey her surroundings, before opening up the cover of the diary.



Three years flew by after meeting with Lillia.

As the citizens of the world were gradually discovering the presence of other worlds, Lillia finally uncovered the hiding place of the Vampire Lord. He was slumming it out underground beneath the city of London.

After receiving the coordinates, Sae-Jin used instant transmission and arrived at the Lord's residence.

The Lord had been weakened considerably after crossing over from his homeworld recently, so only a small dosage of the sleeping potion was needed to knock him out cold. And Sae-Jin was able to snatch away the Lord's most prized possession rather easily.

It was a bloodstone that shined with a sinister reddish hue – the Phantom Bloodstone.

Sae-Jin had no idea how to use it, but whatever, it was still the most important weapon passed down from one Vampire Lord to another.

Kwadeuk!!

Without a shred of hesitation, Sae-Jin destroyed it.

No matter how valuable a tool was, if it was created to rule over other people, then it shouldn't even exist in the first place, after all.



(TL: Told from the MC's perspective.)

Time continued to flow by.

The density of Mana on Earth increased everyday, leading to many strange phenomena to occur. And the world went through a big upheaval and a certain change at the same time, when the presence of refugees and migrants from another world came to be widely known as well.

When Monsters began appearing, new professions called 'Knights' and 'Wizards' were created to deal with the rising threat. The very first Wizard Tower and the Knights Order were established in the USA, and soon afterwards, many more sprang up all over the globe as if they were in a race or something.

During this period of transition, several immigrants from the other world found themselves unable to integrate with the Earth's society and its rules, and began committing various crimes – violent actions of Mah-ins that seemed to know no end, and several mysterious missing persons cases that were suspected to be the work of Vampires, etc, etc.

In order to handle these criminal activities, another profession called 'Mercenaries' got invented.

It happened in the year of 1990. Unable to endure anymore, the countries around the world agreed to call for the extermination of the Mah-ins first. Several thousands, tens of thousands of Mah-ins were executed without a chance for rehabilitation.

And five years after that, the sharp ends of the vengeful spear of mankind wielded under the blinding rage were now pointing towards the Vampires. It was beginning of the so-called war with the Vampires.

And so... the world moved towards the future that I grew up to know.

On a certain Autumn day in 2010.

I stood on a street of a certain city in Gangwon.

It was to meet again with someone I wanted to see so much.

I really wanted to meet *her* before this day, but I had to endure it. I feared that something unexpected might happen, so I didn't even dare to look on from far away, as well.

Maybe, I wasn't supposed to meet today either. I had no idea what kind of butterfly effect today's meeting might cause...

However, my hopes were resting on one significant fact:

Before my mother passed away, she was seen talking to a strange man.

However, the el Las kid or his lackeys had no reason to talk to her in the first place. They were even planning to implicate the Bathorys after murdering my mom, by leaving behind a fake clue – so, they wouldn't do something that might trace back to them, after all.

On that day deeply imprinted in my head, the day I still clearly remember... The day before mom passed away – the day we went to a photo studio.

I came to the bridge where we shared our final goodbyes.

If I waited for a bit here, then soon, mom and the younger version of me would pass by.

And then, she would proceed to gift me an wound that may never be healed.

“Ah.....” (Sae-Jin)

I thought that my tear ducts had dried up due to my advanced age, but just by thinking about it, tears were overflowing out from my eyes.

Thinking about how I'd get to see, and hear, her face and voice that were about to fade from my memories, so many emotions were acting up almost beyond my control.

But, I gritted my teeth and stopped my tears.

It was then.

From afar, I saw a brightly smiling duo of a mother and her son. Seeing her appearance that was so familiar to me, all those tears I desperately held back began pouring out like a waterfall. Strength abandoned my legs and I plopped down to the ground. This was my first time feeling such a powerful mental enervation.

“Sae-Jin-ah, mommy has to go to work for a bit, so...”

I heard her gentle voice so vividly. I was trying to steel my heart, but in that brief moment, it got shattered apart. My throat clammed up and I couldn’t speak anymore; and I couldn’t push my powerless knees to straighten up at all.

“My Sae-Jin can head home alone, right?”

Mom sent me home first, by telling me there was something she had to do.

And so, that child would head home all alone, very soon.

And then, mom would leave me forever.

“Ng!”

Meanwhile, the boy energetically replied and ran towards home.

And mom gazed at the back of the running boy absentmindedly.

I watched them, busy wiping away my tears. This was my one true final chance. I couldn’t simply stop here.

I pushed myself up with both hands. I forcibly stood up. I wiped tears off my messy face and slowly approached her.

Towards her, the one that I was eagerly waiting for.

Chapter 171

In the End (2)

(TL: Told from the MC's perspective.)

When I approached her, mom's eyes opened up wide in suspicion.

But, I just couldn't say anything. My throat clammed up; my chest felt so tight, and I had no idea just how much she knew about this version of me.

And so, we simply stood there, staring at each other.

Wind blew in from somewhere and leaves issued a sorrowful wail.

Mom's long, soft hair danced along with the wind.

"Excuse me...?" (Sae-Jin's mom)

In the end, mom spoke up first.

But, when I heard her voice, my knees buckled so much that I couldn't remain standing anymore. I had to reach out and hold on to the railing of the bridge. Mom quietly gazed at me for a while, before a gentle smile spread on her lips.

"Is there something wrong?" (Sae-Jin's mom)

".....Ah."

Mom questioned.

I needed to answer her.

My throat was still clammy, but I squeezed out my vocal cord to the very limit.

".....You're very beautiful." (Sae-Jin)

There were so many things I wanted to tell her – to tell her at length, with little more detail, containing all my ‘truths’.

But, I didn’t. I just couldn’t.

Every time I tried to speak, tears flooded down my throat, so how could I be able to string out a decent sentence?

As if she had misunderstood my words somewhat, an awkward smile broke out on mom’s lips.

“Ahaha... Thank you for your kind words, but I’m married.” (Sae-Jin’s mom)

“.....How regrettable.” (Sae-Jin)

I somehow squeezed out two more words, and my head dropped.

I wiped the corners of my eyes while moans leaked out of my lips.

Mom approached me with a slightly worried expression after hearing me.

“Are you alright? You don’t have to be that sad...” (Mom)

I shouldn’t be doing this.

No, I must try to memorise every inch of her face, so even when an eternity passed by, I’d still be able to remember her.

Her gentle voice, her beautiful face, her swaying hair... All of those, I must carry them deep within my head, deep within my heart...

“I’m not sad... Just happy.” (Sae-Jin)

Suddenly, a thicket somewhere trembled audibly. Mom took a quick glance at the direction. And I too was desperately aware of what this chain of events meant.

“Ah, in that case, should we... talk about it for a little while?” (Mom)

Mom smiled and spoke to me, in order to lengthen her life just a bit further – to buy time from those b*stards in hiding.

Just that, anxiety and sadness had permeated thickly into every part of that smile.

“.....Why?” (Sae-Jin)

My answer ended up sounding blunt and curt. Because, I might end up crying even harder if I smiled.

Mom replied, never losing her sad smile.

“You remind me of my husband, you see.” (Mom)

I couldn’t remember what I said as a reply to those words.

“No, he died. During his job.” (Mom)

If it was possible, I also wanted to meet my father. But, then again, to a person I’ve not really ‘seen’ the face before, what was there for me to do and say?

But, mom still showed me the photo of her husband. My dad.

As soon as I saw the pic, I spat out the words almost instinctively.

“Wow... You’re right.” (Sae-Jin)

“You see? You really do resemble him.” (Mom)

My heart felt like it might explode any time now, while I struggled to hold back my tears. So, I said whatever that just popped up in my head.

“Well, I guess so... He was a terrible man, leaving behind me and our son all alone...” (Mom)

Their son. A son. Son.

It was only a single word, yet it echoed more beautifully than any known birds singing sweetly, at least to my ears.

“What do you mean, he’s ugly? He’s a really beautiful kid, you know? He’s smart, handsome, full of *aegyo*... He is a carbon copy of your husband, indeed.” (Sae-Jin)

Really, really, it's true.

Mom chuckled.

"You really think so?" (Mom)

However... that was the last of mom's smiles.

We had to say goodbyes now.

"It's already this late now... I think, you should go now." (Mom)

I didn't want to.

I really wanted to tell her that, as soon as I leave, she would die. However, mom was already aware of this fact.

If that was the case, should I just run over to that thicket and kill the b*stards hiding in there?

But... I knew very well that I couldn't.

There was one more thing I had to tell her before that.

"One last thing..." (Sae-Jin)

I was sure that, if I said any more than this, I'd end up crying.

So, might as well tell her straight.

"Forgive me, because this is our first encounter, but..." (Sae-Jin)

While tears fell, I confessed.

"I... I really love you." (Sae-Jin)

And that was how I said farewell to my mom.



I developed a problem since that day.

I couldn't sleep again.

Was it because I slept too much until now, or was it because I was scared of forgetting her face and her voice that I've carefully stored in my heart, during my long slumber?

Whatever the case might have been, I spent my waiting days submerged at the bottom of the ocean, while suffering through a heavy, nasty bout of insomnia. Although it was incredibly lonely down there, I had no choice but to stay, since the Leviathan Form's growth accelerated faster the deeper the sea was.

Another ten years went by, and now, it was the year 1999. (*TL: I didn't make a mistake here; this is how it is in the raw. Just calculate the correct date by yourselves, folks...*)

Carrying around a hollow pair of eyes, I went to see Lillia. There was something I had to do.

Spending the last 50 years or so as the leader of her clan had helped Lillia to transform into the gentle, relaxed and calm person that he remembered.

"...I've really changed after looking after so many people. It's as you said, Mister Sae-Jin." (Lillia)

I smirked a little after hearing her.

Now that I finally met another living, breathing person, I could somehow recover some part of my lost leisurely demeanor.

"But, what brings you here to us today?" (Lillia)

Without saying anything, I handed two scales of the Leviathan that I had ripped off in advance, over to her. Lillia tilted her head slightly while receiving the scales.

"These are..... Oh!" (Lillia)

"That's right. You've read about it in the diary, no? You keep one with you until 'I' show up in the future, and the other one... you give it to the el Las people a few years from

now."

The el Las used this scale as the summoning medium to summon a Leviathan to the Han River. And that was where 'Kim Sae-Jin' earned the ability to transform into the Leviathan.

"But... can the 'same' persons exist so close by to one another?" (Lillia)

".....Probably, no." (Sae-Jin)

One shouldn't take lightly the forces of the cosmos. Never.

The reason why the 'same persons' were existing within the 'same universe' due to 'unknown cause' was quite simple, really – before the error was discovered, it wouldn't be an error in the first place.

However, if these 'same persons' confirmed each other's existences – then, well, only the stronger version of that person would remain in existence.

"But it won't matter. Me of that time period isn't a Leviathan, anyways." (Sae-Jin)

Well, Kim Sae-Jin of the current time period couldn't transform into a Leviathan. That was why I felt confident that the cosmos wouldn't be able to figure out the error and interfere.

"By the way, can't you just hand out lots more scales? I mean, the growth afterwards would be astonishing, right?" (Lillia)

"Two scales are the limit. Even then, don't forget that enough time between the two must be observed as well. Ingest anymore than that, then I fear the past me and the future me would become 'assimilated' and disappear altogether." (Sae-Jin)

"Ah..... that's a distinct possibility. I'll do as you have instructed." (Lillia)

"Thanks." (Sae-Jin)

I smiled in satisfaction.



The news of Yu Sae-Jung becoming the youngest-ever Knight rode on the airwaves and entered my ears. Soon after that, I also heard Kim Yu-Rin, surviving a serious attempt on her life through a Goblin's kindness, exposing the internal power struggle happening behind the closed doors of the Raven Knights Order, and then, becoming a Highest Tier Knight.

In the meantime, 'Kim Sae-Jin' kept himself busy and revealed a potion called 'A Goblins' Kindness' to the world.

While underwater, I pushed the senses of sight and hearing to the absolute maximum, so I could watch and listen to all the news that transpired in the world. I wasn't worried about getting 'old', since the Leviathan Form prevented the effects of aging to affect the main body.

But during the past couple of decades or so, while waiting for the arrival of one certain day, many difficult thoughts and worries piled up in my head.

Could the measly me really stop those b*stards coming out of the Fissure/portal?

And even if I could kill them all, would I be able to live among all the precious people, just like how it used to be?

If I was to count my physical age, thanks to the unceasing flow of time, Bathory's age was an unfunny joke to me now; and if I was to count my mental age, then... Yu Sae-Jung would be like a small child as well. Even if she became a wonderful wife that was mature beyond her years, would I be able to love her, like I once used to?

While submerged deep underwater, I mulled on these thoughts for a long, long time.

And when I had just about reached the point where I couldn't tell whether I was the ocean or the ocean had become me, I could no longer endure it and came ashore.

I headed off to a small and simple town.

There were quite a few people here. But, because of my senses were enhanced beyond belief, every strain of thought and every type of emotion were clearly 'legible' to me.

I shook hands incorrectly, and ended up breaking a person's hand, even. I spent too

much time underwater and forgot how to control my strength properly.

If I was a Knight – no, if I was a human, I'd be able to control my physical strength through either manipulating Mana or with the help of a Trait.

But I was no longer a human.

Because, this strength, this body, belonged to an existence that was not a human...

That was why... I couldn't dare to brave myself back into the society anymore.

In the end, I returned to the depths of the ocean and simply chose to watch and listen through my senses, instead.

And then... on that day.

A summoning magic's chant entered my consciousness.

I agreed to it, and when I opened my eyes, I found myself at the Han River.

And at the distance, I saw the restaurant where Kim Sae-Jin – me, Yu Sae-Jung, and Kim Yu-Rin were together.

I was quite dazed by this, but came to my senses soon enough. I shouldn't remain inert, after all.

SFX for a loud roar

I immediately issued out a roar.

Screams of the regular people resounded out from everywhere, and not too long after that, Kim Yu-Rin jumped out from the window while shattering the glass.

And as expected, she ignored everything and hit me in the forehead with her sword.

I could feel her Trait, 'Desideratum', activating.

Of course, it didn't hurt at all.

So, the real reason why she was able knock out the Leviathan with her Trait wasn't

because of the weak-sauce excuse of the divine creature's power halving due to the summoning process. No, that happened only because the Leviathan itself wished to get 'knocked out' from her attack.

Well, I welcomed her hit with open arms and fell into a sweet slumber. It may have been a short one, but it'd been too long since I had one.

And when I woke up around ten minutes later, the deep navy blue that could even be described as pure darkness greeted me back.

Yes, it was the exact same location that I spent the proverbial eternity in.

However, I began chuckling to myself, instead.

Because, it wouldn't be too long now.

This extreme loneliness, this intense longing...

The end of them all were now in sight.

.....Still.

At the end of all this waiting, just what was I supposed to do?



There was the loud sound of the Fissure vibrating.

My entire body shuddered in unbridled joy.

Strange, unknown creatures began invading the ocean.

I opened my eyes and laughed out loudly.

Finally, I could liberate myself from this unending perpetuity and search for my own flow of time.

And just as my entire being shook feverishly with my heart pounding away in madness...

A certain scene popped up into my head, as if I pressed play on a video clip.

"Well, I'm off."

And that was of me about to leave the flow of time a long time ago.

I wanted to ask that guy, if he could even begin to imagine how long he would have to wait and fight against the most cruel loneliness ever conceivable to a man.

But me, well, 'he' just left, not knowing anything and not wanting to know anything.

And then... as promised, Bathory began her desperate struggle alongside humanity to fight against the horde of dimensional invaders.

Unfortunately, the black mucous substance broke out from the ground in the end, and rose up higher and higher to the sky. What would be the most correct term to describe the massive being that finally stood on earth? The disgusting son of a b*tch? No, there should be an even more fitting swear word for that thing.

Thankfully, the creature spent the rest of the day still stuck inside the mucous membrane covering it.

On the following day, the membrane evaporated somewhat, and the creature's arm was exposed.

Jet-black skin, and blue veins visible underneath it.

Emboldened by the liberation of its limb, the creature swung its freed arm. Without much fanfare, more than half of all military and Knight personnel waiting there, got wiped out.

However, the creature didn't do anything else besides that.

It wasn't some kind of a moron who threw away all the good food and then ate the scraps off the floor.

No, it was pure arrogance on display.

Another day went by. Its right arm got freed this time.

But still, the creature didn't make another movement.

Most likely, the ugly face hidden behind the mucous membrane was smiling insidiously.

Too bad for the b*stard, I too was looking at it with a thick smile occupying my face.

Would the creature ever realise the fact that its arrogance, conceit, and ego had in fact brought on about its own demise?

And finally. The next day.

Just as the creature's two legs gained their freedom...

The alert window that I was waiting for all these years finally rose up.

[The growth of the Leviathan has been completed.] [Condition complete: 'Enduring the harsh eternity, like an Imoogi ascending to become a Dragon'.] [The host will evolve into the Dragon of the Oceans, Bahamut.]

[Condition complete: 'Plea of the Gaia'.] [The Skill '???' has been unlocked and it has been upgraded to the unique ability, 'Divinity'.]

Finally, I had escaped the perpetuity of time.

And now, time to go to war.

Chapter 172

In the End (3)

Billions of people dazedly looked on at the horrifying existence standing tall – some through their naked eyes, while others, through the airwaves.

Funnily enough, even with the absolutely terrifying and unimaginable threat standing right in front, not one cliched occasion of some nutter proclaiming the end of the world could be seen. No incidents of robbery, violence, rape, etc, etc, happened, either.

Everyone simply stared at the creature with eyes completely lost within the pits of despair – the being that just stood there, not affected in the slightest by the combined might of the military, Knights, and Wizards, with not one person able to tell what it was planning to do.

[It has been now confirmed via the testimony of the first generation migrants, that the being on screen is called the ‘Dimensional Devourer’. Although it is one level lower in terms of danger compared to the ‘Universe Devourer’, we have learned that this creature has destroyed countless worlds already.]

Even under this kind of situation, the news channels faithfully carried out their duties.

However, this piece of information delivered with such desperation ended up sounding like a horrifying eulogy to all those stationed at the battlefield.

“What’s the current situation? Do we have enough leeway to pour all our attacks on that b*stard?” (Kim Hyun-Seok)

The supreme commander of the gathered forces, Kim Hyun-Seok, asked a junior Knight, while his body was covered from head to toe in unidentified blood and dirt.

“We are at the very limit of our capacity trying to deal with the new Monsters emerging from the Fissure, as well as existing Monsters running amok under that b*stard’s influences, sir!”

“.....D*mn it.” (Kim Hyun-Seok)

Kim Hyun-Seok spat out a low groan. But, in all honesty, he too expected something like this. The only things they could do right now, were to quell the rampaging Monsters, or simply observe that damnable 'Devourer'.

But, even doing that wasn't easy.

The battalion of soldiers desperately guarding the frontlines with all their might got destroyed with a single swing of the giant creature's fist, and more than half of the gathered Knights seemed to have lost their dang collective minds after witnessing that incredible display of power.

Not to mention, mental and physical strain of the troops fighting for the past five days straight without a break or sleep were taking their toll as well. Kim Hyun-Seok even saw several soldiers deserting their posts and running away.

He couldn't imagine a situation worse than this one.

"...We still need to hold the line." (Kim Hyun-Seok)

Of course, Kim Hyun-Seok could not give up here. Knights, as well as the military, were the citizens' so-called psychological 'Maginot' line. So, if he and his men were to retreat from here, then the country, even the entire world, wouldn't be able to survive. No, he couldn't back away from here, even if it was only to repay the faith and love people had shown them until now.

"Yes, sir. Understood."

The subordinate Knight nodded his head and took his leave.

Kim Hyun-Seok grasped his sword tightly and glared at the giant creature that he couldn't still take in its entirety even with his neck tilted way back.

This was the only thing he could do for now.

For the first time in his life, he could truly feel the inadequacy of his powers.

It was now noon, yet the sun was still blocked by the jet-black clouds, and very little light was coming through.

And, just as the Korea's best Knight stared at the heavens and lamented the fact that

he couldn't do anything...

Something that could only be described as quite bizarre happened.

“...What the hell is that?”

The ‘beginning’ was nothing more than someone murmuring out in a daze. That was all. No one paid him any mind. However, this person didn’t let it go, and poked the Knight next to him with an elbow.

The poked Knight was way too tired to even get annoyed, so he had to endure the abuse for a bit of time, before finally turning his gaze towards the direction his pokey friend was pointing at.

And then, he ended up doing the exact same poking thing with another Knight next to him.

That was how the eyes of the Knights gradually rose up to the sky, one by one.

With enough time passing by, the need to poke others with elbows had dissipated, and in the end, even camera lenses were taking in the sights of the emergence... of a new unknown being.

From within the beating, swirling storm of winds that seemed to rip apart those murky, dark clouds, a mystical creature slowly revealed itself.

Spreading out its noble and pure blue-coloured wings widely, its deep yet dignified eyes looked down on the world below, and its powerful and resolutely-shut maws pointed towards the Dimensional Devourer.

Knights, soldiers, even normal people couldn’t even begin to fathom the identity of that creature.

However, strangely enough, they all could faintly guess what it could be.

That creature was an exact copy of the dragon in the fairytales and legends of the yore.

“What the...”

Just before the gathered Knights could fall into a collective dilemma of choosing

between whether to celebrate this new development, or to throw away even the last vestige of hope – the dragon-like being lunged at the still-awakening Devourer.

The world got twisted apart momentarily from the air pressure and noise generated by that powerful, mad rush forward.

Needing only a blink of an eye that felt like the flow of time had been distorted, the dragon arrived by the side of the Devourer and wrapped the tail around it – then, began gathering a massive amount of Mana in the mouth.

And the Devourer, until now inert and simply observing, hurriedly moved its arms and grabbed the dragon's – Bahamut's – tail.

Too bad, it was one step too late.

A jet-black Breath beam was fired out without special sound effects and blew away the Devourer's head.

"What...?"

"Huh....."

And there they were, unable to damage the Devourer no matter what they tried – jaws of the gathered Knights dropped to the floor, after witnessing empty spot where the giant creature's head should have been.

—!!

However, the Devourer wasn't dead. Although now headless, it moved its one arm and two legs to fiercely resist.

That was the signal for the mighty physical struggle between these two titans that shook the entire world.

An indescribable scene of battle unfolded, where fists and front claws, kicks and tail whips were exchanged endlessly.

However, after losing its head, the Devourer had lost its sense of sight and all it could do was flail its arms and legs about wildly.

Of course, those simple actions alone possessed incredible danger. Sae-Jin had found it difficult to properly control his new wings and was helpless when he got punched by a blind swing and flew away. Then, he even got kicked in the stomach, as well.

Only after he spat out black blood out, he decided to deal with this b*stard using magic.

Still, the Devourer proved to be not a simple opponent at all. As soon as it sensed the activation of magic, it too responded with magic of its own. The only difference was, the Devourer's did not just aim at the dragon only.

It was targeting the entire world. The sole purpose was to destroy.

Bahamut hurriedly fired off a Breath. In the end, though – Sae-Jin returned to fighting it physically, in order to prevent the fountain of blood from the Devourer's destroyed arm landing on the ground below. To stop it from using magic ever again, he hit it even harder than before.

But, well, from the very beginning of this battle, there could only be one destined victor between the headless Dimensional Devourer and Bahamut with all its body parts still intact.

The longer the fight dragged on, the Devourer's ability to make judgments suffered, and in the end, it threw its arms and legs wildly as if it had forgotten how to use magic completely. That only lasted until another Breath from Bahamut pierced its heart.

...And so, the Dimensional Devourer that seemingly possessed no equal in this world, fell while issuing a bizarre cry that sounded like an animal, and scattered away into black smoke.

Only the silence remained afterwards.

Not even screams, cheers, loud shouts, or praises could be heard.

This remained true even for the reporters broadcasting the event live, the anchors relaying it to the ordinary people, as well as those said people watching on.

This silence was so suffocating and unreal that tens of thousands souls gathered here ended up imagining this was all just a long and harsh nightmare instead.

Within this stillness, Bahamut slowly flew away.

While blood poured out from numerous wounds on his body, the dragon desperately flew towards the East Sea where he would be healed.

Only after he had drifted away eastward, and after a considerable length of time went by, did the remaining army of fighters realise what had just happened.

One by one, they began approaching the position where the Devourer used to stand with numb and dazed minds.

With the exception of giant craters where the Devourer's massive feet stepped on, there really was no trace of the Monster itself.

The reality finally dawned on them and they stared up at the heavens above.

Just in time, the dark clouds drifted away and several bright rays of sun shone brilliantly down on the ground.

And so, the world would never forget the beauty of the sunlight seen for the first time in five days.



(TL: Told from the MC's perspective.)

It was a difficult, yet ultimately hollow battle that, after its conclusion, was hard to recall exactly what had transpired.

That was why, as I laid this body that was so close to death by the depths of the ocean, I couldn't really remember anything.

Although, I did sense the faint pulsing of this planet, Earth.

And also, I could more or less understand that the planet was thanking me.

I was confident that it was gratitude.

A lifeform wished to live.

It was the same whether you were a human, an animal, or a Monster – even, Earth too.

The planet wished to survive. It wished for its salvation. That was why it deliberately created ‘Traits’. So, the truth was completely opposite to all those experts that yammered on about ‘Fissures creating Traits’.

The fruit of that desperate struggle, created in order to find even the tiniest hint of possibility for survival – born out of the irresponsible mentality of ‘anything is fine, so please, let one stick’, that was Trait.

That was why, I knew I’d wake up for sure, sooner or later.

The warmth of the divine energy wrapping around me while I remained submerged deep underwater was the proof of this.

Also, the texts ‘Plea of the Gaia has been completed’ appearing in front of my eyes were another proof.

I was only entering a deep slumber, just like how it always had been.

And soon, I would be able to meet up with the others.

And, I would be able to love them as an ordinary person by then.

I truly believed that would come to pass.



(TL: Told from Yu Sae-Jung’s perspective.)

With the appearance of the legendary creature, Bahamut, the world finally found peace.

The unstoppable calamity, the Dimensional Devourer was defeated at the claws of Bahamut, and soon, many Fissures opening up around the world began to close for good, one by one.

However, at the same time, small chaos ensued as well. Because, all Traits had suddenly vanished into thin air.

Many, who enjoyed charmed lives but now had to live like the rest of normal people, couldn’t quite come to grips with this reality and were wading through pits of despair.

Of course, those like Joo Ji-Hyuk and Yu Sae-Jung, whose egos weren't inflated by their Traits, had no problem whatsoever adopting to the new life.

On the flip side, Mana and Monsters didn't disappear. One thing that did change was that Monsters couldn't replenish their numbers through the 'external supply' anymore and had to live, breed, and perish in the exact same manner of every other normal wild animal.

Of course, if Monsters were exterminated, that would cause too much of a shock to the world's system, so they would not be pushed towards extinction. Instead, they were to be reared by mankind.

A month after the passing of the great calamity, a religion worshipping Bahamut sprang up. People were disappointed and distrustful towards the pre-existing religions that didn't offer any real, tangible aid during the most obvious apocalyptic threat ever recorded in history – and also, with an uncanny timing, several 'followers' of Bahamut popped up suddenly, too.

The pre-existing religions offered the usual line of excuses, even going as far as to say that their gods had sent Bahamut to humanity and all that, but with the exception of a small percentage, modern humans weren't delusional enough to fall for such empty claims.

Inevitably, after the religion came the organisation, and eventually, the Bahamut organisation's greatest temple of worship was built on the very spot where the Dimensional Devourer was felled. This place became the holy land that many worshippers from all corners of the globe made pilgrimage to.

A religion that became one of the biggest in the world through only a single moment, the Bahamut Church – and the leader of this organisation was Lillia.

And also...

'He' had disappeared.

No one knew where he had vanished to.

Did he run away because he fell in love with another woman, or did he migrate to another world after he got scared by the prospect of the world coming to an end...?

And it seemed like the only person who knew the details was the Bathory woman, but it was difficult to meet with her, and when I somehow found a chance to ask her, she refused to give me a straight answer.

I could only spend the time alone, with no one to blame.

I found out for the first time in my life that prolonged longing could morph into powerful heartache. But, I endured, believing that I would see him sooner or later.

And so... a year went by, without him by my side.

Finally, the date for the regular gathering of The Monster Guild had arrived. So, I tidied myself up and went there.

'All Guild members must attend the meeting.'

I was so sure that he wouldn't forget the one real rule he came up with for the Guild he created with his own hands.

After all, the gathering was supposed to take place on the 17th of every month, but in his consideration, it had been changed into an annual event, instead.

So, he should show up on this one. He must.

The gathering was scheduled for seven in the evening, and I arrived at 6:30. However, everyone was here already. Kim Yu-Rin unni, the Tower Lord Hazeline, the member of parliament Yu Baek-Song, the married couple Joo Ji-Hyuk and Yi Hye-Rin, Bathory and Rhosrahdel, as well as Kim Sun-Ho and the rest of the newbie members.

Everyone greeted me with welcoming faces.

Yet, only one person was missing.

"You came?" (Kim Yu-Rin)

Yu-Rin unni asked me first. I forced out a smile.

"Yes. Unni, I heard you've been really busy lately? It must've been really difficult to find a gap in your schedule... Thank you for coming today." (Yu Sae-Jung)

As soon as Monsters became existences that needed to be reared for the future rather than to be exterminated on sight, Yu-Rin unni left the world of Knights immediately without any regrets.

And then, she concentrated on the entertainment industry side of things.

She made a success out of three, four variety shows she appeared in as a regular cast member, and her debut as an actress was a roaring success as well.

So, nowadays the name ‘Kim Yu-Rin’ was better known as a celebrity rather than a former Knight. Understandably so, she was incredibly busy in her life due to all of her entertainment industry commitments.

But, even though she was busy, she found time to continue her work as the ‘Orc Enthusiast’. The thing was, many Hero Orcs still existed – they even rescued many ordinary people attempting to run away from the rampaging Monsters, and offered shelter within their village. Which in turn, made them into national treasures of Korean people.

“That’s true, but I still wouldn’t miss this gathering.” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“No wait, Sae-Jung-ah. This unni, she only came here to see whether he’s coming or not. You gotta watch out now. This person here, as much as you, she wants to see hi...”
(Yi Hye-Rin)

“*Uh-muh*. What could you possibly be talking about?” (TL: ‘uh-muh’ = ‘oh my, my.’) (Kim Yu-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin added some spice in a playful attempt to get a rise out of her, but now that Kim Yu-Rin had escaped from beneath the weighty burden of being a Knight, and thereby becoming much more relaxed, such a provocation didn’t work anymore.

“Hahat... But, you, Hye-Rin unni, I thought you’d be too busy being lovey-dovey for today.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

Joo Ji-Hyuk and Yi Hye-Rin must’ve been the most famous married couple in Korea right now. They were appearing on two TV shows together, and all the sweetness they poured out to each other on screen was something else to behold, really.

“Well, we can still love outside the house, right~?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

While saying something that might lead to a misunderstanding, Yi Hye-Rin leaned her head on Joo Ji-Hyuk's shoulder.

Hazeline looked at the duo with a dissatisfied expression, before lamenting out softly.

"Anyways..... He's not coming again, is he? And I even shoved all that urgent Tower business aside to come here." (Hazeline)

Hazeline was currently reigning over the world's best Wizard Tower as its Lord.

Unlike Knights, magic still played big part in society even after reduction in the Monsters' numbers, so rather than the industry faltering away, it saw many leaps and advances forward, instead.

Well, pretty much every Wizard that was somewhat undecided between sticking to attack magic used to deal with Monsters, and the practical, everyday magic with potential to help the world, finally chose to go with the latter, that was why.

Under these changes, the Dawn & TM's Tower became widely acknowledged as the best in the world.

The thing was, the legacy of Bangbae-Dong Wizard, no, wait, no – most of the 28 grimoires he published before he left had real world applications, it turned out.

And thanks to his enormous accomplishments until the end, the name of the Wizard of Bangbae-Dong, who had vanished without a trace, had become an everlasting legend that may never be repeated again in the Wizarding world.

Bathory did complain slightly during that, though, saying all those magic spells were nothing more than some amateurish rejigging of stuff already existing in her head.

It was then, Yu Baek-Song tugged at Hazeline's robe.

"Hey, help me with my campaign funds." (Yu Baek-Song)

"...Are you insane? Why should I spend money on a cat entering politics? Besides, you've been elected already, so what gives?" (Hazeline)

"I need lots more later on. You think running a constituency is that simple? At minimum, I gotta be elected three times." (Yu Baek-Song)

“But, isn’t there still lots of time left until the election?” (Hazelene)

“I’m specially elected to fill a vacancy, so I gotta get elected again in a year, you know.” (Yu Baek-Song)

Surely, the most *weird* prospect here belonged to Yu Baek-Song. She became a member of parliament. On top of this, her ambitions began ballooning up without anyone noticing it, and now, she could often be ‘seen’ staring at a certain House with Blue roof tiles with eyes burning with desire.

“Hey, how was the reaction to the interview I shot today?” (Bathory)

To the side, Bathory showed no interest in them whatsoever, and was busy asking her ‘retainer’ while looking at her phone.

“It’s very good, ma’am. Everyone’s praising you!” (Rhosrahdel)

“Heu~eung.”

At Rhosrahdel’s energetic reply, I could hear a slightly happy snort from the side.

It was really tough trying to predict what could’ve happened to Bathory and Rhosrahdel, during this past year. Well, Bathory had emerged as the clear leader/representative of the union of Vampires, after all.

At first, she alternated between the persona of the Wizard Emil and Bathory the Vampire, but after receiving a perfectly-timed image makeover at the hands of Rhosrahdel, she could appear as Bathory nowadays without an issue – she was even being seen as a goddess of peace and reconciliation, a moniker people and Vampires alike who knew the truth could never comprehend.

“There hasn’t been any incidents lately, Mister Sun-Ho?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Ah, well. Besides taking care of the children, nothing much’s been going on in my life, miss.” (Kim Sun-Ho)

As for Kim Sun-Ho... he resigned from all of his duties and then, became a father of twins. A son and a daughter, no less.

“Mister Sun-Ho’s children are so, so cute you know? Let’s go and visit them sometime.”

(Yi Hye-Rin)

“.....Yes.”

I smiled relaxedly at Yi Hye-Rin’s words.

And so, our unhurried conversations took flight. Waiters brought out wonderful food and expensive alcohol, and the members made sure there was no lull in our conversations.

Topics ranged from newbie members, the road ahead for TM to the succession at the Dawn, etc, etc...

But, with the exception at the very beginning, no one talked about ‘him’ anymore.

Everyone was being considerate to everyone else, and also, there remained this slim hope and expectation running within our group, too – where he might just show up out of the blue, that kind of hope.

And so, we talked about unimportant matters and inquired about each other’s lives, letting the time slowly move forward.

One hour, then two, three, four... time continued to flow, but no one gave up.

However, midnight came, and the day had come to an end.

The date for our regular gathering had come and gone.

And that meant, the possibility of seeing him ‘today’ had ended, as well.

Guild members did their best to hide their sadness, shared well wishes and bid farewells.

I returned home feeling rather proud of myself for holding back my tears.

But once I did get home, I felt the cold emptiness of this place and I began crying again.

To not find him waiting for me at the end of a day, it was the worst torture ever.

All those things I did for him and those that I couldn’t yet, stabbed my heart like an

assassin's dagger.

I wanted to see his face, and repeatedly say his name out aloud.

And the fact that I couldn't do any of those without him here made it so unbearably hard.

I buried my face in the pillow and cried.

Then, I gradually fell asleep from the exhaustion.

He left as if there was nothing big going on, and disappeared as if he wasn't even there since the beginning.

But, he did exist, and even if he didn't, I still wouldn't be able to forget his face, now deeply ingrained in my heart – so, even spending one day without him was painful.

I suffered from anxiety that tomorrow wouldn't come at all.

But, I believed his promise that he'd come back no matter what.

It might not be tomorrow, but when he would make his return, I'd forgive him. No, really.

I might give him a big fat slap on the cheek, though. And then, hug him tightly, as he faltered about cutely.

I imagined the happy moments of the future and endured every day.

I endured two days like that.

Then, four days.

And so...

Spring, with flowers blooming.

Summer, when the clear winds blew.

Autumn, as the leaves on trees grew older.

And finally, after Winter, when snow blanketed the world in white...

Another year, that seemed like it would never arrive, arrived.

Chapter 173

Epilogue - Meeting Again (1)

(TL: Told from a certain someone's perspective.)

It was a typical midsummer's afternoon, with its accompanying sun blazing down – the worst type of weather, where taking only three steps would cause a bead of perspiration to trickle down one's face. The heat-infused winds and unceasing sun's rays were enough to cause a bit of resentment as well.

Underneath the clear, spotless blue sky, I wiped the beads of sweat off my face after lowering the pack of bricks to the ground.

“Oiii, Kim!!”

My break only lasted for a moment, though. The unique, roar-like voice of the foreman was ringing out loudly. There were plenty of Kims in this construction site, but I knew very well which Kim he was looking for.

“Yes, yes. I’m coming. Coming.” (Kim)

I lacked enough energy to mount a serious complaint, so I just made my way to the foreman. He instructed me to move the rebars loaded onto the back of a delivery truck. I didn’t say anything, simply picking up dozens of those steel beams and moved them.

A normal person might say that I used some arcane skill or displayed a superpower or something after seeing what I did, but well, guys working here didn’t really seem to care anymore, as they were quite used to my antics already.

“As expected, you are really strong, aren’t you, lad?”

The foreman patted my shoulder while chuckling happily. But that slight touch caused the temperature on my skin to flare up and in turn, I didn’t feel so good about that.

Construction work was tough. Honestly, it was the worst. Especially during Summer, it got even worse than worst. Sweat poured out endlessly and clung to my skin like

sticky glue, while the rancid body odour got more disgusting than a blocked up sewer.

“Well, yeah, sure. I guess so~”

But, hell. What could I do? Since there was literally nothing inside my head, I might as well use this physical strength of mine like some dumb beast of burden.

“Seriously, lad. You truly have been born in a wr~ong, wrong era, man. If you were born at least 20 years earlier, then you’d have made more money than necessary to live like a king, you see.”

“You mean, as a Knight?” (Kim)

“A Knight, a Mercenary, whatever”

I grinned slightly after hearing the foreman. I was satisfied by getting paid slightly more than other workers here. Plus, I didn’t have such high level of power to act like a Knight or a Mercenary, anyways.

“Anyways. You still can’t remember a thing?”

The foreman asked me in passing. I nodded my head.

I had no clue who I could be. Not one memory of my past prior to waking up in a hospital bed remained in my head. I got picked up by a stranger coincidentally as I floated on the waterfront of Busan, and was taken to the nearest hospital. Then, got my new identity after going through several interviews and consultations later.

If this was any old ‘normal time’, then my story would’ve been broadcast as a special circumstance or some such, but after that *day*, there were lots more suffering greater tribulations than me everywhere, which meant that there hadn’t been any particular article written about me until now.

“What a waste. With that kind of strength, you could’ve done whatever you wanted to.”

“It’s really not that amazing, so it’s fine not to fret over it, you know.” (Kim)

“I’m not talking about your strength only, but your great work ethic, too. I’m almost tempted to introduce you to my daughter, even...”

“...I’m just a construction worker, so not quite sure you should do that.” (Kim)

Although I replied like that, I was kinda curious – the foreman was taking sweet his time, as if he’d pull out a photo any time, but then...

“Well, the thing is, I was just pulling your leg, you see. Hahahaha.”

.....Son of a b*tch. But I still forced out a smile.

“Ha. Ha. Ha.” (Kim)

“Still, out of everyone I know, you have the best physique, and not to mention that strength of yours. It’s a waste to see you like this, rotting away in a construction site.”

“And who in their right minds would employ a man with an uncertain background like me?” (Kim)

My face was plain, my height was average. They checked my prints but nothing showed up. I even had my iris scanned. Nothing. It was as if I didn’t exist before, and suddenly popped out of nowhere into this world.

“Well, sure, but... Ah, that’s right. Why don’t you apply for a job in that bodyguard place, since they are recruiting new people? You should get *elected* for sure, solely based on your strength alone.”

“And why would I be *elected*, now...” (Kim)

“Five days a week, \$3000 a month.”

“Oh. Do you have the pamphlets with you?”

If it’s three grand for five days a week, then it was more than doable. I could do another part-time job during the weekends. But, more importantly, I was already past 25 – according to my new identity – so I couldn’t stay and work at construction sites forever.

“Here.”

The foreman handed me a flyer, and as I read it, a small grin crept up on my face.

"If it's five days a week for three grand, I will only be able to work on weekends, but will that be okay with you?" (Kim)

"Huhuh. It wouldn't do to block a bright future of a young man such as yourself, now would it? When you show up wearing a nice suit, don't forget to ask my daughter for her intentions, you hear?"

"There's no need. I'm pretty sure she resembles you way too much, Mister foreman..." (Kim)

"What the?! You will get a huge surprise when you see her..."

I simply chuckled and glossed over the foreman's outrage at his daughter getting involved now.



"This profession of personal protection service is completely different from the work of Mercenaries!! We value loyalty more than money..."

The giant hulk of a man charged with assessing the potential recruits was not assessing, but was in the middle of busy establishing militaristic discipline – through shouts, shouts and more shouts.

It must be quite effective towards other recruits, since their bodies were trembling imperceptibly, but I found it not scary at all, for some reason. No, rather than scary, it was more adorable, like watching a newborn chick tweeting or something.

"Do you understand me?"

"Yes sir!"

"I can't hear you!!"

"Yeeeeees sir!!!!"

Only then, the giant man nodded his head in satisfaction and continued.

"First of all, do not mistakenly believe that having a good physique is all you need to become a top bodyguard. Let me demonstrate. Oii, you."

The man pointed at me. Meaning, the demonstration would involve me, so I couldn't tell whether it was me or him enjoying the wickedness of rotten luck today.

"Sir." (Kim)

"Step forward."

".....Sir." (Kim)

"Come at me."

I stepped forward as instructed. And then, ran towards his side as ordered, too. As soon as I made contact, he grabbed my waist and tried to lift me up, but...

"Uh?! Euh-ah-ahck!!"

Maybe, this was what they were referring to as 'muscle memory'. I picked up the entire body of the recruit assessment guy and slammed him down to the ground.

Kwahng!!

The dude remained sprawled on the floor unconscious, his eyes slack. And there was thick silence descending on the place.

"Huh..."

"That's crazy..."

This guy must've been the top hidden 'ace' of this company, because other employees who came around to check out the assessment couldn't stop their jaws from hitting the floor.

And that was how I got successfully hired as a temp.



That 'five days a week, three grand a month' thing was a total hogwash. I worked for a full month without a day off and ran around like crazy, yet the pay was only around \$2200. It was far lower than I'd like, but then, the work itself was fun, so I decided to stick around for a bit.

Another reason was that, I seemed to possess a really sturdy body, which meant I didn't need a lot of sleep and didn't fall ill at all, either.

There was a time when I 'protected' a politician from a thrown egg; then, there was that time when I stopped someone from trying to invade the stage where an event was taking place; hell, I even chased away the so-called biggest fan – read stalker – of a certain girl group that other time as well.

The most important bit was me saving the girl group.

Right after that happened, one of the singers asked me for my number, making me wonder whether this was a dream or reality. Not sure what she saw in me, but she then asked me if I'd like to become her 'manager'. Her name was 'Yu-Ah', by the way. A very pretty girl, too.

"Not interested. Besides..." (Kim)

"I asked the director, and we can offer you three and a half grand a month." (Yu-Ah)

"...Why is the salary of a manager that high?" (Kim)

"Well~, because, I'm sure you'll do a great job, and also, I asked the director really nicely, you know?" (Yu-Ah)

I was wondering how could a girl group that was just beginning to get noticed, carry any clout, but her next words stopped my thought train.

"And, the director is my uncle, too." (Yu-Ah)

Well, in that case, I should grab hold onto this meal ticket, then.

"I was planning to resign soon, anyways. Oh well. Even if I run around for a year, my pay would freeze around at 2.5k, so if I consider my age... You know this too, don't you? Stories about guys like me." (Kim)

"How old are you?" (Yu-Ah)

"...Eh?"

"Your age." (Yu-Ah)

I couldn't recall it after getting asked out of the blue, so I whipped out the wallet and checked it again.

"I'm 25." (Kim)

"Fut. Why are you checking out your own age?" (Yu-Ah)

I chuckled and made some stuff up on the spot.



And well, two years passed by after I switched my job from being a bodyguard to a manager of this girl group.

Of course, it wasn't as if I was rubbish at my new job. It seemed that I was an excellent driver in my past, because as soon as I got my licence, I ended up morphing into the best driver in the company, enough to astound everyone else. Also, my luck was pretty good as well, since all the appearance deals on TV shows I brought in turned out to be massive successes as well.

Thanks to that, I got a promotion and became a head of the department while still staying as the group's manager.

The work remained crazy busy, but what with the increase in salary, I finally got to enjoy a pretty good lifestyle now.

"Oppa. Don't you wanna go to a party with me today?" (Yu-Ah)

It was on a certain day.

As we made our way back home after recording Yu-Ah's solo album launch, she suddenly asked me while her cheeks dyed in slight red.

"What party are you talking about now?" (Kim)

"There is a really important party happening today, you know? I got lucky, and scored an invite for that." (Yu-Ah)

"Okay, what is it?" (Kim)

“It’s the birthday party for Yu Sae-Jung *unni*.” (Yu-Ah)

“.....Yu Sae-Jung?” (Kim)

The name sounded somewhat familiar. No wait – if that name didn’t sound familiar, then I shouldn’t even be a human being. She was the most famous woman in Korea, after all.

As if she was really looking forward to this, Yu-Ah’s eyes were shining ever so brightly.

“Ng. You know, right? I did that show not too long ago, remember? I heard there will be a birthday party so I asked if I could come and she gave me an invite! Plus, I got another one, too! Well? You will go with me, right, Oppa?” (Yu-Ah)

“...Hmm.”

I pretended to be in a dilemma, but well, I had made up my mind already.

“Since you asked me, yeah, I will.” (Kim)

I smiled at Yu-Ah adorably throwing up a fuss and pressed on the accelerator.



(TL: Back to the third person perspective.)

Aboard the so-called pride of TM, the cruiseliner, a big party was in the full swing of things. From the spectacular spotlights to various delicacies flown from all around the world, from the high-class music playing in the background to the smartly-dressed waiters – this party, where all the attending guests couldn’t stop praising it, was prepared for the sake of just one person.

And that was Yu Sae-Jung, the future inheritor of the Dawn conglomerate, as well as the director of the Dawn & TM’s Wizard Tower.

She was exactly the type of woman possessing the social clout and financial muscle to hold such a birthday party, that’s for sure.

“Well now, our Sae-Jung will soon become thirty, won’t she?” (Hazelene)

“Wow. You’re so right.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

After hearing Hazeline speak up, Yu Sae-Jung feigned shock and lightly clapped her hands. Yu Baek-Song quickly dug in between the gap created.

“And you will soon turn forty.” (Yu Baek-Song)

At this unexpected low blow, Hazeline’s brows furrowed slightly.

“...But you’re also forty, aren’t you?” (Hazeline)

“It’s not, when counted in Soo-in years.” (Yu Baek-Song)

“In that case, I’m also not.” (Hazeline)

“But Elves can’t live for long, right?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“I can live past 120 with no issues.” (Hazeline)

An average lifespan for an Elf was 1.5 times longer than a human’s. And befitting the reputation as the race of beauties, the aging process of Elves was far, far less severe than a human’s, even when hanging on by the death’s doorstep. It was not for nothing that there was a joke about an Elf with wrinkles being a few days away from dying.

“Whatcha gonna do about it, Miss 40?” (Yu Baek-Song)

“.....Yapping on and on, you’re being noisy, little kitty.” (Hazeline)

Yu Baek-Song and Hazeline glared at each other and started a psychological warfare.

However, their abrasive and childish tit-for-tat looked like an awesome high-level conference full of important discussions to the observers from afar.

“If we are to talk about ages, then the biggest problem is with our Captain, Miss Yu-Rin. Her age isn’t all that different from Hazeline Unni, and she’s neither an Elf nor a Soo-in, on top of that.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin giggled ominously and dragged in Kim Yu-Rin into this conversation, who just so happened to be busy chugging down lots of food on the side. Of course, Kim Yu-Rin got surprised by the inclusion, and coughed while patting her chest as if the food

went down the wrong hole.

“.....Cough. W, why are you talking about me all of a sudden, now?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

“Because, we’re worried about you. Maybe not marriage, but how about going on a date with someone? You’re only getting older, you know.” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Unhappy but having nothing to retort with, all Kim Yu-Rin could do was to wordlessly glare at Yi Hye-Rin. It was then, Joo Ji-Hyuk cleared his throat a bit and intervened.

“Well, it should be fine, since Miss Yu-Rin is still very beautiful.” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

“.....What the heck? Listen here, just whose husband are you?” (Yi Hye-Rin)

“No, I’m just saying...” (Joo Ji-Hyuk)

“How many times did I tell you not to look at other women besides me?!” (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin pinched both of Joo Ji-Hyuk’s cheeks and fixed his head towards her direction.

Yu Sae-Jung gazed at the two of them and recalled the happy yet sorrowful past. Then, for some inexplicable reason, she felt this sense of familiarity and turned her head around.

And there was a man standing there, who seemed quite familiar to her. That man was looking around with a pair of dumbfounded eyes, as if this was his first time attending a party like this one.

Seemingly entranced by something, Yu Sae-Jung’s feet moved on their own.

And soon after, as she got close enough to touch him.

“Oppa~.” (Yu-Ah)

Someone else appeared and took away his hand. Startled, Yu Sae-Jung took a couple of steps back. And the two people ended up discovering her presence because of that.

“Ah, Sae-Jung Unni!” (Yu-Ah)

The woman greeted her happily. And the man who resembled ‘him’ so much, lightly bowed his head.

“Uh, uh...” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Is there something wrong?” (Yu-Ah)

“N, no. It’s nothing. Just...” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Oh my? You’re suddenly using formal speech...” (Yu-Ah)

Unfortunately, Yu Sae-Jung couldn’t even utter out a single question before hastily retreating to a far away distance from them.

Chapter 174

Epilogue - Meeting Again (2)

(TL: Told from Yu Sae-Jung's perspective.)

His height and even the face, as well as the 'atmosphere' of the person were different from Kim Sae-Jin, although there were also some similar points as well.

However, he did say his physique and facial appearance had changed a good deal due to his Trait's effects. Truly, the first impression of his face I got, which was getting very faint in my memories nowadays, did gradually change as the days went by.

Right. The unexplainable mystery called Trait had disappeared from this world, hadn't it?

Of course, just because Traits had disappeared, that didn't equate to everything built up by them also disappearing as well. The clear example of this was my own body, changed with my Trait's help.

But, no matter how hard I thought about it, that man's face was remarkably similar to Kim Sae-Jin's 'first impression' still faintly remaining in my mind. It might be nothing more than my baseless hope cooking up some nonsense, but he just felt way too familiar to me.

It was then, Yi Hye-Rin was asking me with her head tilting slightly.

"Sae-Jung?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

"Ah, yes?"

"What are you looking at?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

"I... It's nothing, really..."

I couldn't concentrate on the party anymore. I tried to lighten up the air around me, but I kept on glancing back towards where he was. Watching him smile brightly while

looking at another woman made my chest tighten.

All these men approaching me with smiles were getting annoying now. Even the wonderful tunes beautifully draping over the party was getting on my nerves, too.

In the end, I had to make up my mind. Except, I couldn't muster up enough courage, so I poured the whole glass of champagne down the throat. Even that wasn't enough, so I downed another one. And then, another.

People around me were showing confusion at my sudden drinking spree, but I didn't care.

After all, the only existence that mattered to me right now was that man.



(TL: Back to third person perspective.)

“Oppa. Did something happen with Yu Sae-Jung Unni somehow?” (Yu-Ah)

Yu-Ah ended up questioning the manager. She could no longer ignore Yu Sae-Jung continuously glancing at her direction.

However, the manager, Kim Yun-Jeh, simply shook his head disinterestedly.

“No, nothing happened. First time meeting her today.” (Kim Yun-Jeh)

Of course, Yu-Ah didn't find this easy to accept. How could she be convinced that there had been no incident of any kind, when Yu Sae-Jung was repeatedly glancing over at their direction for some time now? Obviously, one of them did something wrong here...

“Maybe you did something wrong?” (Yu-Ah)

“I'm telling you, there's nothing... Ah. Was it because me only nodding my head once when greeting her just now?” (Kim Yun-Jeh)

“Ah?! You only nodded once? That's so arrogant, you know!” (Yu-Ah)

Yu-Ah jumped up in surprise and tugged at Kim Yun-Jeh's arm even harder.

Almost instantly, Yu Sae-Jung's stares became sharper by a level. It even felt like her stares were stabbing into their skin.

"Okay then – what should I have done? Bend over backwards 90 degrees or something?" (Kim Yun-Jeh)

"No, hang on... maybe not 90, but you could've done a 60 instead, you know!" (Yu-Ah)

"Oh, really?... No, wait minute here. I'm sure Yu Sae-Jung isn't such a narrow-minded woman." (Kim Yun-Jeh)

"H, hey?! Look at this guy here, blurting out whatever he wants...!!" (Yu-Ah)

Yu-Ah hurriedly covered up his mouth. And then, worried about being overheard, she quickly surveyed the surroundings.

"Euh-urck."

And as expected, Yu Sae-Jung was glaring with terrifying eyes at her direction – heck, with teeth gritting, no less.

".....Let's just get out of here first." (Yu-Ah)

"What? But why?" (Kim Yun-Jeh)

"I can't afford to lose Oppa just yet." (Yu-Ah)

"No, hang on. What are you even on about..." (Kim Yun-Jeh)

In the end, Yu-Ah dragged Kim Yun-Jeh and hurriedly ran out from the party venue.

".....Ah."

Yu Sae-Jung could do nothing but to helplessly chase after the departing backs of the duo with her eyes. And there she was, hoping that drinking four more glasses of the bubbly stuff would finally give her the necessary courage, too.

"Ha-ah..."

She spat out a long sigh, while resenting her aching innards that didn't want her to get

drunk at all.



That night.

Escaping from the party venue alone, Yu Sae-Jung went to find Lillia with a resolute determination. She could no longer endure it anymore.

She had been waiting until now, fearing that if she learned of his passing, then the last strand of hope she'd been carrying around all this time might be gone too. But then, she encountered a man who resembled Kim Sae-Jin so, so much tonight. So, how could she be expected to remain calm now?

Lillia found it very difficult to deal with Yu Sae-Jung and her determination.

Although she knew the details, Lillia kept mum because she thought she was following Kim Sae-Jin's will. But even she decided to break the silence after listening to Yu Sae-Jung's tearful recount of the earlier encounter.

Because, Lillia became even more convinced that he indeed got 'saved by the Earth' from Yu Sae-Jung's testimony.

So, Lillia told her everything, leaving nothing out.

All the 'worlds' he had to live through, all the weight of pain and suffering he was burdened with and had to endure, in order to protect everyone, and even the reason that made all of that possible.

Pressured by the enormous truth of the matter, which was more than enough to refer him as a saintly figure, Yu Sae-Jung felt like being crushed to the floor, and she couldn't even utter a single word out.

"If that man was really Mister Sae-Jin, then it's most likely that the planet has given its thanks and rewarded him. Not only taking away his Trait, but also his memory as well, allowing him to live happily like an ordinary person." (Lillia)

Lillia also tried to search for Sae-Jin's whereabouts on her own as well. But, according to the reports of the intelligence operatives, they couldn't find anyone resembling him. However, the story changed if he reverted back to his old appearance before the Trait

manifested, just as Yu Sae-Jung had posited.

No, it was still too early to discard the possibility that the Earth created a brand new body and revived him.

"In that case, what should we do? What if he really is Kim Sae-Jin? I..." (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Even if that person really turns out to be Mister Sae-Jin, and even if he's not... It'll be very difficult." (Lillia)

"No, what the hell are you saying? Are those words or farts? Please, speak properly so I can understand you!" (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung just couldn't maintain her calm, and Lillia could only look at her with pitying eyes, before carrying on.

"If he's not Mister Sae-Jin, then that's that, but if he is, then that presents a lot of problems. If a person who had been living for 600 years regains his memories, do you honestly believe he'd be able to maintain the same personality anymore? Also, in his previous life, his entire being evolved into the legendary Bahamut. In other words, he had become a being that's no different from an actual deity." (Lillia)

Lillia then added, *wouldn't we look like ants to him once he regains his memories?*

Yu Sae-Jung couldn't reply. She wanted to argue about something nonsensical, sure. But her throat had clammed up and she couldn't summon up her own voice anymore.

Her head was full of stinging pain, causing her to think that this truly unbelievable story sounded far more real than reality, all the while Lillia's words stabbing into her heart was making her scared. Terrified.

Finally, she couldn't withstand the tide of emotions wanting to drown her and plopped down on the floor. And then, for a long time she cried while emitting pained moans.



(TL: Back to Yu Sae-Jung's perspective.)

August 19.

At first, I was full of despair. However, I somehow regained enough of my senses and observed him for a long time. It felt like a year had passed, but in reality, it was only for a month.

If someone saw my obsessed behaviour, I'd be labelled as a stalker, but every passing day felt like blood was draining from me, so I couldn't help it.

Every night when I fell asleep, I dreamed a dream and a nightmare at the same time, the former about him coming back and smiling at me like how he did before, and the latter about losing him to a girl named Yu-Ah before he could regain his memories.

And today – I could no longer endure this torture and had decided to proactively try something. That was today.

I requested Mister Hahn-Sung to schedule a private meeting with the man. This was possible because he worked in the entertainment industry, while I was the majority shareholder of The Monster Entertainment.

August 19, 17:47.

Only 13 minutes remained until six in the evening, the scheduled hour for our meeting.

I soothed my nervousness by chewing on my nails, and I resolved my worries, albeit only by a small amount, with my legs trembling all the time.

And as the phone's screen indicated 18:00...

The door to my office was pushed open.

Stunned silly, I shot right up before I even realised it.

“Hello, there.” (Kim Yun-Jeh)

“Ah, yes, h, helooooOOOW!!”

Oops, I got too loud there, didn't I? My consciousness dimmed for a bit thanks to that stupid mistake of mine. But, I couldn't black out here, no matter what... I desperately held on and pointed at the couch.

“.....?”

“P, please have a seat. Hurry.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

He tilted his head slightly, but still managed to sit down. Soon enough, a silence descended in the office for the next three seconds, but as I couldn't endure it, I hastily walked over to the desk where tea and snacks had been arranged.

“Would you like some tea?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Eh? No, I’m...”

“Drink.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

I obstinately put the tea cup down on the coffee table. I couldn't help it – my heart was beating so wildly, it was nigh-on impossible to act normally right now.

“Oh... uh, sure.” (Kim Yun-Jeh)

I carefully studied the way he glanced at the tea and the prepared refreshments. The cold sweat slowly pooling behind my neck began dripping down my backside.

Actually, this arrangement was a ruse to try and discern the truth.

A person's habits ingrained into one's body would never change, even if he had lost all his memories. And I could remember all of his habits clearly, since I had lived with him for a such long time...

And in that moment, electricity zapped my back.

The way he held the tea cup, the way he ate refreshments...

I was sure now.

This man here, he was Kim Sae-Jin.

“May I ask for your name again?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“.....My name is Kim Yun-Jeh.”

Of course, the name was different. But, this man was, without a doubt, Kim Sae-Jin. That sitting posture, his waist slightly turned away when facing me; that habit of

rubbing the left thumbnail when nervous; even the actions of sweeping his hair away.

Seeing him like this, I got buoyed by my emotions and ended up asking him an unexpected question.

“Don’t you recognise me?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Eh?”

His face showed how confused he was. He looked so adorable then, I was tempted to embrace him tightly. But I knew better than anyone that I should not do that.

“Don’t you recognise me? Me, I’m Yu Sae-Jung.”

“.....Ahh. Of course, I recognise you. I’ve seen you on TV quite often.” (Kim Yun-Jeh)

“...Besides that?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

My sights were blurring. Seemed like tears were blocking up my view but I couldn’t wipe them away. I lost all strength in my arms, that was why.

Afterwards, it was like several screws came loose in my head. I couldn’t remember what we talked about at all. I could only suspect that I might have tearfully repeated the question ‘don’t you recognise me’ over and over like a mad fool.

Whatever the case might have been, when I came to, he was no longer in the office. That felt even worse than before, and I ended up crying alone. I really sobbed at the top of my lungs.



(TL: Told from the third person perspective. C’mom, Author, just stick with one perspective for the whole chapter already!!!!)

With a swollen pair of eyes, Yu Sae-Jung called for an urgent meeting of The Monster Guild members. Well, the only people she could openly discuss this matter was with other Guild members, after all.

“What a complicated situation this is... So, you’re really sure that guy is Mister Sae-Jin?” (Kim Yu-Rin)

"Yes, I'm almost definitely sure. Well, I still need to look up what had happened here, though." (Yu Sae-Jung)

At Kim Yu-Rin's question, Yu Sae-Jung replied in a calm manner. It was as if she had regained some peace of mind after sobbing her eyes out.

"Okay, so? What's the problem? You just have to go at it nonstop, no? I mean, Sae-Jung-ah, you can pretty much seduce any guy if you wanted to, right? So, you wrap him around your fingers first and be in love together, whatever, then wouldn't his memories slowly return in time?" (Yi Hye-Rin)

Yi Hye-Rin's solution was the most brilliant one considering the situation. However, the sole problem with this suggestion was that it wasn't only Yu Sae-Jung who had realised something important from it.

".....Hmm."

"Uh..."

Both Kim Yu-Rin and Hazeline carried serious expressions as if deep in thought and meaningfully rubbed their chins.

Seeing this, Yu Sae-Jung hastily pounded on the table. Her entire body trembled from the shock of this sudden betrayal.

"You guys better not think of something funny. I'm warning you!!" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"W, why are you saying I'm thinking of funny things now...?" (Hazeline)

Hazeline sneakily avoided Yu Sae-Jung's gaze and pulled out her phone. Since this action was very suspicious, Yu Sae-Jung quickly snatched it away.

"I was just thinking about how to restore Mister Sae-Jin's memories, that's all." (Kim Yu-Rin)

Even though Kim Yu-Rin spoke thus, there were droplets of perspiration clearly visible on the back of her hands.

"....."

Yu Sae-Jung frowned deeply and glared at them.

It was then.

"Hey, everyone, I found him!!!"

Bathory literally kicked the door down and entered the venue.

"I said, I found him!!!" (Bathory)

"...What the heck."

As soon as the gazes gathered on her, Bathory triumphantly declared to everyone present.

"I just so happened to catch a Mah-in with a funny ability, you see? This b*stard can sense the flow of Mana signature even if it's gone out of our dimension..." (Bathory)

"Oh, you mean Kim Yun-Jeh? The man working as a manager at the 'Rochen' Entertainment?"

Suddenly, Bathory's face froze up like a stone statue.

".....And just how the hell you idiots know that?" (Bathory)

Everyone gathered in the conference room giggled softly, while Yu Sae-Jung approached and gently held Bathory's hand.

"Thank you, for the confirmation." (Yu Sae-Jung)



Kim Yun-Jeh was on his way back from the convenience store after buying a Western-style takeaway, then his steps came to a halt after seeing many stuffs belonging to a new tenant moving in piled up on the apartment parking lot.

For some reason, quite a few unbelievable people started becoming his neighbours lately. He had no idea why, but Hazeline and Kim Yu-Rin, Joo Ji-Hyuk and Yi Hye-Rin, Kim Sun-Ho and Rhosrahdel, as well as other members of The Monster had moved into this apartment building.

Of course, he wasn't discontent or some crap like that. Actually, he was really happy at the fact that the price of the place he bought with borrowed money had shot up through the roof, and that he was sitting on the proverbial gold mine as a result. That was why he could carry a huge grin everyday.

Kim Yun-Jeh stared at the tall height of the stuff belonging to the new tenant, and eventually, his eyes met the blue sky above.

The blue Summer sky with not one cloud on sight, it sure looked pretty.

And to think, such a clear sky was covered in darkness and on the brink of apocalypse a few years ago, or so he heard.

"To protect that sky, the Bahamut had sacrificed itself, you know."

It was then, a rather sexy voice tickled his earbuds.

He turned around to find Yu Sae-Jung. Only then, he remembered that she too had moved to this apartment as well. The media was shouting about her presence being the 'finishing touch' or some such.

"The Bahamut, you say?" (Kim Yun-Jeh)

"Yes." (Yu Sae-Jung)

".....Ha, haha..." (Kim Yun-Jeh)

Kim Yun-Jeh just chuckled. Well, he couldn't remember any of that, anyways. He probably did see it back then, no, without a doubt, he lost his memory after getting entangled in that somehow, and now, the inside of his head was as empty as a sheet of blank paper. It was such a frustrating and rather lonely feeling, this.

Yu Sae-Jung carefully approached him as he chuckled bitterly to himself.

"Mister Yun-Jeh, do you live around here?" (Yu Sae-Jung)

"Oh, uh, yes, I do." (Kim Yun-Jeh)

"What a coincidence, then. I just moved here, too." (Yu Sae-Jung)

Yu Sae-Jung pointed at the stuff behind her and grinned refreshingly.

“.....Oh, really?” (Kim Yun-Jeh)

“Yes, really.”

While seeing Kim Yun-Jeh’s uninterested eyes looking back at her – no, seeing Kim Sae-Jin like that, she firmly resolved herself once more.

And that was – even if he had lost all the memories created with her and thus no longer was Kim Sae-Jin, she would still not give up. She would do anything possible to get him back. No matter what.

And so, for her very first operation (?) today, she even resorted to borrowing the power of “mother”. With the justification that the mother was to be her in-law soon enough, she searched around and finally located a certain charnel house, and located the only photo the mother-in-law and the ‘husband’ took together all those years ago.

“H, hmm.”

While apologising furiously inside her mind, Yu Sae-Jung walked past him and dropped the photoframe ‘accidentally’. Hearing the *thud*, her chest jumped a bit, hoping that the glass didn’t shatter from the fall.

And as she pretended to not notice for the next three seconds or so, he started talking to her first, as planned.

“Excuse me, this...” (Kim Yun-Jeh)

He picked the photoframe off the ground and stared at it for a long time.

At that very moment, her heart stopped beating. *Please, please...*

However, the meaningful glint in his eyes only lasted for a short while. He just tilted his head slightly and handed over the frame to her.

But Yu Sae-Jung was satisfied by this. The signs of confusion and *deja vu* written large on his face for a brief moment, those were enough. The possibility definitely existed now.

“...Looks like you were heading in as well? Would you like to accompany me along the way?” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“Yes? Ah, sure.” (Kim Yun-Jeh)

He nodded his head.

Although it was only ten seconds from there to the elevator, she still felt unbelievably happy inside.

She even wanted to hold his hand, but decided not to get too greedy. Just walk alongside, for now.

“By the way, is it okay to leave your stuff back there like that?” (Kim Yun-Jeh)

“Yep.”

Hearing him, Yu Sae-Jung pointed at the photoframe, or more correctly, a boy smiling inside the photo.

“I only... need this one, you see.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

It didn't matter to her even if he had no memories of the past.

In that case, all she had to do was to create new, fun memories with him, and to replace the old one that was filled with only the lonesome, endless waiting.

Although her efforts might be cheaper and worth nothing compared to what he had experienced, she was still prepared to wait and pour every fibre of her being to make her resolutions a reality.

“See you around~.” (Yu Sae-Jung)

“.....Ah, sure thing.” (Kim Yun-Jeh)

She stared at the side of his face somewhat shyly while her fists clenched tightly.

She wasn't worried, nor did she feel scared. No, she simply imagined the bright future with him once more and smiled.

The sky had cleared up wonderfully now.

And surely, the brightly smiling sun floating in that blue clarity would continue to shine with warmth on them, hopefully without the darkness trying to dye the world again.

And after some time would flow by...

'Someday, that happiness we've been wishing for will be ours.'

Yu Sae-Jung gazed at him, and smiled radiantly like the sun.

Fin~

[The author, Jee Gab Song's postscript.]

Everyone, thank you for reading until the end. I love you, my readers. Even to my own belief, all my words seemed really lacking, but still... I can only thank you again and again.

While writing this, I had a few regrets and felt bad about missed chances. Since I lacked the gift of gab, I can't seem to explain myself properly, so...

To summarise in three sentences:

1. Even though this work was lacking, regretful and somewhat incomplete even from the author's point of view, I still like to thank every one of you for reading it regardless.
2. I'm sure there were times when you thought you didn't get your money's worth – you have endured well.
3. I'd like to return with even better work next time!

Everyone, I'll see you all later. Goodbye!

[The translator's take]

What can I say, other than to repeat what the author wrote above mine – thank you, everyone, for sticking with this novel through thick and thin, through all the infuriating arcs and genuinely cool moments.

This was my first attempt at fan translating a novel, and in the process, I have learned a lot. I will always be grateful for that.

Also, I'd like to specifically mention the excellent work put in by my editor, akshaythedon. He's my partner in crime for this adventure. Although he told me he would stop editing after the conclusion of this novel, I still wish for him all the best in

the world.

Oh, before I forget, Mister Author, I'd like to also thank you for infuriating me with many, many weird turn of phrases and inconceivable Hanja combinations that basically didn't have any meaning peppered throughout this novel. Digging through internet trying to find out what you were trying to convey was really not fun and time consuming, you know!!!

And finally, once more, thank you guys and girls for taking your valuable time out to choose & read this novel, as well as all those incredibly generous and wonderful folks who had donated and sponsored countless chapters during the TL run. There are so many names, I can't even begin to write all of them down, otherwise you might end up reading until the end of next year! LOL. Regardless, you guys totally rock.

My next project(s) will be... well, watch this space, folks. It's going to be a doozy.

A_Passing_Wanderer, signing out.

[The editor's rant]

Heya, people! I am akshaythedon, the editor of this novel. It has been a crazy roller-coaster ride for me with this novel. At first, I actually started having some interaction with the TL A_Passing_Wanderer when I was reading his original. Then, by some inexplicable forces, I ended up helping out with this fan translation as an editor. And forgive me if I had not made the novel as readable as you guys would have expected.

I still remember the days where we did a mass release and Wand and I would end up doing some work overtime, despite our regular schedules. It seems surreal for the novel to have been completed (even though it is a small one). Unfortunately, I won't be able to continue my tryst with Wand as I am stuck in a transition phase in real life. (You know, job and the risk of being an unemployed.)

Hopefully, Wand would get another editor, better than me if possible, for the novel(s) he would be translating and for the original that he would continue working on later.

And finally, I would like to thank the author for writing a reasonable story that could

be enjoyed by the audience. I hope he could continue producing novels better than 'A Monster Who Levels Up'.

For all the readers, continue your habit of reading these novels, so that more fan translations would pop up and who knows, some great gems could be unearthed from this vast world of novels.

Okay, I guess I have rambled too much... Thank you for reading the novel once again.

This is akshaythedon, signing out.



PtF by: traitorATZEN